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Marquis de La Fayette

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THE MARQUIS DE LA FAYETTE

IN

THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION.

WITH SOME ACCOUNT OF THE

ATTITUDE OF FRANCE TOWARD THE WAR OF INDEPENDENCE.

BY

CHARLEMAGNE TOWER, LL.D.

THIRD IMPRESSION

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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PREFACE.

I HAVE endeavored in these volumes to trace the career of the Marquis de La Fayette in America, from the time when he came here in 1777 until he returned to France after the surrender of Earl Cornwallis, in 1781. I have used for this purpose the letters preserved among his private papers which were published in his Memoirs and Correspondence by his family after his death, and I have carefully examined a large number of manuscripts in this country, among the official documents of the Department of State, as well as in private collections and those of institutions to which access has been granted me.

I have taken especial care to present in detail the military operations of the Virginia Campaign, during which La Fayette held an independent command, with as close attention to his own statements as possible, frequently in his own words, in order that I might give a faithful account of the part he played.

I have followed also with some minuteness of detail the efforts of M. de La Fayette in our behalf at the Court of Versailles during the year 1779 whilst he was in France upon leave of absence; for his incessant presentation of the American cause at that time to the Cabinet of King Louis XVI., and particularly to the Comte de Vergennes and the Comte de Maurepas, had

an influence which contributed very greatly to the ultimate establishment of independence in the United States.

In coming before the public with this narrative, I beg leave to acknowledge my obligation to M. Henri Doniol, Correspondant de l'Institut, Directeur de l'Imprimerie Nationale, who has rendered an international service to France and America by the publication of his admirable work, "Histoire de la Participation de la France à l'Établissement des États-Unis d'Amérique."

Students of American history are indebted to M. Doniol for the collection and arrangement of documents relating to the part which the Government of France took in the uprising of the Colonies of North America against Great Britain, as well as to its participation in the War of Independence and in the establishment of the American people as a nation, which have been preserved in the Archives of France for more than a century, most of them unknown, many of them forgotten, and all of them difficult of access to inquirers upon this side of the Atlantic Ocean. His exceedingly painstaking researches have presented to us the sources from which Americans may obtain a definite comprehension and form a proper estimate of the early relations of France to our country.

Comparatively few people of the present generation are aware of the inestimable benefits which the French nation conferred upon our forefathers during the American Revolution, at a time when America was without credit abroad and when our cause aroused no other national sympathy in the world than that of our faithful ally.

France had her grievances against Great Britain as well as we, it is true; and she entered into our contest for reasons which were satisfactory to herself, in the same manner as every nation has enlisted in a foreign cause since the beginning of recorded history. But for us Americans the essential facts to be remembered in connection with the alliance are that we went of our own accord to France to ask for help, and that we received it from her. Not only did she encourage us by the permission which she granted our agents to obtain supplies and munitions of war in her ports for the maintenance and equipment of the Continental army, but she employed her own credit to borrow large sums of money which she advanced to Congress, and she sent her soldiers and her sailors to serve under the command of General Washington and to fight for us in the battles of the Republic.

Many of the darkest moments of the Revolution were illumined by new hope when means were supplied us, in the midst of an almost desperate struggle, by the powerful hand of France; and the documents in the French Archives bear witness to the constant solicitude with which the American cause was watched over and protected by the Comte de Vergennes, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, whose name, with the names of Rochambeau, d'Estaing, Gérard, La Luzerne, and de Grasse, must always be held in honor in the United States.

In quoting from the documents of France, I have usually given, besides the folio and number by which each is designated in the Archives, a reference to M.

Doniol's work, in order to assist students in their examination of that repository of American history, from which I have obtained much of the genealogy of the Marquis de La Fayette, as well as his coat of arms, which I have reprinted here.

Through the courtesy of General George Washington Custis Lee I have been permitted to copy the portrait, by Charles Willson Peale, of the Marquis de La Fayette as a frontispiece to the first of these volumes. This portrait, which hung for many years at Mount Vernon, was painted for General Washington, from whom it descended to its present owner, General Lee.

I have been honored by Madame Corcelle Marquise de Chambrun, who has sent me a copy of a miniature of Madame de La Fayette painted about the time of her marriage, which I have used at the beginning of the second volume. And I beg leave to return my thanks to M. le Comte d'Assailly, who has aided me with a generous interest in my work.

I desire to express my grateful sentiments to Cornell University for copies of the maps of the Sparks Collection, now in its Library, from the originals made for General de La Fayette, showing the operations at Gloucester, at Barren Hill, at Monmouth, and at Newport, which I have reproduced; to Harvard University for copies of the Sparks MSS.; to the New York Historical Society for copies of the Steuben MSS.; and to the Historical Society of Pennsylvania for copies of the MSS. of General Anthony Wayne.

I am indebted for valuable assistance in the preparation of my work to Hon. A. A. Adee, Assistant Secre-

tary of State, to A. R. Spofford, LL.D., the distinguished Librarian of Congress, to M. le Professeur Georges Cardon, of Paris, and especially to my friend and fellow-student Frederick D. Stone, Esq., Librarian of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

The references which, for brevity, have been made in the foot-notes to the "Mémoires de ma Main," the "Mémoires historiques," and the "Correspondance de La Fayette," are to the "Mémoires, Correspondance et Manuscrits du Général Lafayette, publiés par sa famille," Paris, H. Fournier aîné, Editeur, 6 vols., 1837–38.

CHARLEMAGNE TOWER, JR.

PHILADELPHIA, December, 1894.

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The Marquis de La Fayette

IN

THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION.

CHAPTER I.

THE COMING OF LA FAYETTE TO AMERICA.

One of the most picturesque and interesting figures of the American Revolution, which counted among its leaders and supporters many of the remarkable men of the eighteenth century, is that of a youth of nineteen, born of an illustrious family of the ancient nobility of France and bred in the midst of the most conservative influences of the old régime, who suddenly came upon the scene as a defender of liberty and a champion of human rights. This young French nobleman, who had left his home and crossed the ocean to fight in the American War of Independence, illustrated to an extraordinary degree the sympathetic interest with which men in distant parts of the world watched the struggle in which the Colonies of North America were then engaged: the earnestness of his convictions and his zeal in the cause of freedom astonished the members of the Continental Congress before whom he appeared in the summer of 1777 and announced himself as the Marquis de La Fayette.

It was difficult then to comprehend, it excites amazement even now, that a foreigner should unite his efforts with ours in a contest in which he had no personal inter-

est and no advantage to gain beyond the establishment of a principle,—the principle of liberty, upon which is based the system of our national rights.

Strange as it appeared, however, this was the motive which brought La Fayette to America. With the single thought of aiding in the foundation of the United States as a free and independent nation, he served America with unswerving devotion throughout the War of Independence, and asked for no compensation beyond the privilege of fighting in the Continental army as an American soldier in defence of liberty.

The enthusiasm which impelled La Fayette thus to espouse the cause of the American people arose from his ardent love of freedom; the sources of his inspiration are not to be sought amid the influences which were at that time active and which led subsequently to the participation of France in the American war, but were the generous impulses of his own heart.

It was believed for a long time, even in France, that his service in America was connected in some manner with the known friendship of the Cabinet of Versailles for the Colonies of North America and with the alliance into which King Louis XVI. entered with us, later, against Great Britain.

But, while he played a very important part and rendered valuable services to the United States by negotiating in our behalf at the French Court after the alliance, it is probable that La Fayette would have come to America if France had never declared war in our favor; and certainly France would have participated in the American Revolution if La Fayette had never existed.

His coming was so far from being part of the plan of the French ministry that it was opposed and even forbidden by the Government. But the difficulties which he encountered in carrying out his undertaking served only to intensify his efforts. The storm of opposition from his

family, the threatened penalties of disobedience to the King, the separation from those he loved, the grief of his young wife, were all subordinated to the great purpose of his life, his leaving France to help America; a step which his angry relatives called a *coup de tête*, but which was in fact an act of chivalry.

The family of La Fayette was one of the very ancient houses of France. It took its name and title from a small fief in Auvergne, called Fayette, or La Fayette, mentioned in a document which was executed by one of the lords of the tenure, as *Villa Faya*, about the year 1000.

At that remote period the ancestors of the La Fayettes had already established their local importance in the province of Auvergne and had begun to form the alliances which, in succeeding centuries, were to connect them with some of the most powerful and distinguished families of the kingdom. The race was a military one. Its representatives fought in the wars from the time of the Crusades, with great honor to themselves as well as to the name they bore, and with loyal devotion to France; many of them having fallen, as the French writers expressively describe it, "morts bravement à l'ennemi."

The original family name was Motier; which became, from the tenure of the seigneurie of La Fayette, Motier de La Fayette. We find it represented in the middle of the thirteenth century by the head of the house, Pons Motier, Seigneur de La Fayette, from whom, through a younger son, the line of our General de La Fayette is derived. This Pons Motier, who died about the year 1300, married, in 1240, Alix Brun de Champetières, making thus an alliance from which sprang two branches of the family,—the elder known by the name of Gilbert Motier de La Fayette, and the younger by that of Roch Motier de Champetières. The elder of these branches inherited the estates and bore for many generations the title of Seigneurs de La Fayette; whilst the other, that of Motier

de Champetières, occupied for a long time a position of merely local importance, until, by the failure of heirs male in the elder branch and through substitutions made by will in favor of members of the younger, the titles and estates of the family descended to the Motiers de Champetières, who were ultimately known as the family of La Fayette.

The landed possessions of their ancestors were situated near Forez, at the sources of the river Dore, where they continued to reside until the latter part of the fifteenth century. At that time, Gilbert Motier IV. married Isabeau de Polignac, with whom he moved farther south, toward Velay, in Auvergne, and established his residence at the castle of Saint-Romain, in the little district of Chaliergue. Here his descendants remained, and here, also, the descendants of the younger branch came afterward to join them; for about the year 1600, Jean Motier de Champetières, who was called Seigneur of Champetières, le Bouis, de Paulin, and la Garde, Chevalier of the King's orders, and governor of the town and castle of Monistrol, in Velay, married Jeanne de Polignac, Baronne de Vissac, through whom his descendants, the Motiers de Champetières, became Barons of Vissac and inherited the ancient castle of Vissac, in Auvergne, whose ruined walls may still be seen, as may also, not very far away, those of Saint-Romain, the feudal residence of the elder branch. Extraordinary measures were taken during several centuries to prevent the loss of the family name and titles through failure of heirs male in the direct line of descent or by alienation through the marriage of females into other families, and frequently the inheritance was devised to younger brothers, or even to collateral kindred, in order that the continuance of the family might be assured; a precaution rendered all the more necessary by the ravages of war in a family in which nearly every man was a soldier, and which at times was threatened with extinction by losses in battle,—so much so, indeed, that it be-

came traditional in the family that the La Fayettes all died in battle and died young.

A substitution of this character, of very great importance to our Marquis de La Fayette, took place at the end of the seventeenth century, by which his branch of the family, the Motiers de Champetières, inherited the name and estates of the elder branch of Motier de La Fayette and ultimately also the title of Marquis to which they had attained. The Comte René-Armand de La Fayette, by his will dated the 11th of May, 1692, devised the estates of the house of Motier de La Fayette, and with them the name of La Fayette, to the great-grandfather of our Marquis de La Fayette, Charles de Motier de Champetières, Chevalier and Baron of Vissac, Seigneur de Vedières, Fargettes, Jax, and le Bouschet, to the exclusion of his brother, the Abbé Louis de La Fayette, who was in holy orders, and of his daughter, Marie-Magdelaine Motier, dame de La Fayette, who had become by marriage Duchesse de la Trémoïlle. From this time, therefore, the younger branch of Motier de Champetières assumed the name of Motier de La Fayette; though the marquisate of La Fayette descended to Mme. de la Trémoïlle from her father. She devised, however, by her will, dated the 3d of July, 1717, to her cousin, Jacques Roch Motier, the seigneurie of La Fayette, situate in the parishes of Fournols and Eschandelis, in Auvergne. This cousin, Jacques Roch Motier, having died in war without issue, the title passed to his younger brother, Michel Louis Christophe Roch Gilbert de Motier de La Fayette, the father of our Marquis de La Fayette, who thus became head of the house, both as Baron de Vissac and as Marquis de La Fayette, in succession to a long line of ancestors illustrious in the annals of Auvergne and in the history of France.

They were distinguished in the wars from very early times, as the family records amply show. Pons Motier de La Fayette was at Acre, in 1250; Jean Motier de La

Fayette fell at the battle of Poitiers, in 1356; and Gilbert Motier III., Maréchal in the wars of Charles VII., is still remembered in France as one of the celebrated leaders of his century. His son, Charles Motier, was knighted at the siege of Rouen, in 1449, and after other military service he appears as Deputy to the States-General at Tours, in 1468. Gilbert Motier IV. was at the Court during the reigns of Louis XI. and Charles VIII. Antoine de La Fayette commanded the King's artillery, and Louis was governor of Boulogne. The Comte René-Armand, to whom we have already referred in connection with the substitution made by him under the provisions of his will in 1692, was captain in the King's regiment in 1659, colonel of the regiment of La Fare in 1680, and afterward brigadier of infantry toward the end of that century. The line of Motier de Champetières kept pace in this service of the King. Thus, Jean Motier de Champetières was Sénéchal of Auvergne in 1604. Two of his grandsons were distinguished soldiers: Jean-Marie, Baron de Vissac, spent his life in camps and on the battle-field, through nearly thirty years of service, and we find him Lieutenant du Roi at Strassburg in 1692; the other, Claude Motier, "Chevalier de Vissac," died at Troyes in 1692, after thirty-eight years of service, having been present at sixty-five sieges and taken part in numerous pitched battles. The grandfather of our Marquis, Edouard Motier, had a brilliant military career, and was wounded at Philipsbourg, at Mons, and at Speyer; later, his uncle, Jacques Roch Motier, and his father, encountered the destiny of their race. They were both killed in battle, —his uncle at the age of twenty-three, and his father, as we shall see, before he had reached twenty-five years.

Among the women of the family of La Fayette were two especially who added lustre to the name,—one, by the charm of beauty and of graceful manner, Louise Motier de La Fayette, the object of great admiration on the part

of King Louis XIII., and the other, by her intelligence and the brilliancy of her imagination, Marie Madelaine Pioche de La Vergne, Comtesse de La Fayette, who was born in 1634 and who married in 1655 Jean François Motier, Comte de La Fayette. She was the celebrated author of "Zaïde" and of the "Princesse de Clèves:" the Comte d'Haussonville has written in our time a most attractive account of her.[1]

The La Fayettes were very widely related by marriage with prominent families in France, among them those of Polignac, Bourbon-Busset, Marillac, de Trémoïlle, Montboissier, de Lusignem-Lezay, la Rivière, and de Bouillé,—the latter an illustrious house, from which sprang the distinguished French general of that name, and whose continued public services to France have produced notable men down to our own day, the head of it, the enlightened and courtly Marquis de Bouillé, having been Ambassador of France at Madrid within the last twenty years. The father of General La Fayette, Michel Louis Christophe Roch Gilbert de Motier de La Fayette, Marquis de La Fayette, Baron de Vissac, Seigneur de Siaugues-Saint-Romain and Fix, married, on the 22d of May, 1754, Marie Louise Julie de La Rivière, daughter of the Marquis de La Rivière, granddaughter of the Comte de La Rivière and de Ploeuck, lieutenant-general, and captain of the second company of the Mousquetaires du Roi (the Mousquetaires Noirs). Upon the occasion of his marriage with this young lady, whose family possessed an influence at Court which was immediately exerted in his favor, the Marquis de La Fayette, at that time but twenty-two years of age, received the cross of St. Louis and was made colonel of the regiment of Grenadiers de France.[2]

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[1] Mme. de La Fayette, par le Comte d'Haussonville, de l'Académie Française, Paris, 1891.

[2] Curiously enough, there is no record of the date at which the family of La Fayette acquired its title of marquis, or of the services by which it attained

He lived during the short period of his married life in the castle of Chavaniac, an ancient "maison forte" which is described by M. Doniol, himself a native of Auvergne, as "a great and rather heavy manor-house fortified in the fourteenth century, situated only a little way from the castles of Saint-Romain and Vissac, though lower down toward the plain. It arrests the attention of the traveller by the odd pigeon-house coverings of its towers, which have lost their symmetry through restorations of the roof after its destruction by fire, and by the crenellated terrace of its dungeon. It formed, with a little village which grew up about its walls upon the rugged hills, a parish of the 'collecte' of Saint-Georges d'Aurat, in the 'election' of Brioude, in the province and 'généralité' of Auvergne. From its windows, through which there is a view far over the surrounding country, the eye discovers the Allier, looking in the direction of Langeac, Paulhaguet toward the north, and here and there farm-houses or neighboring castles built upon the cone-like hills of the volcanic formation. The landscape, relieved by the fresh green of the valleys, in its setting of mountain ranges whose crests arise in outline one after the other along the sky, and dotted here and there by clumps of fir-trees, has something of the severity of mountain scenery, though tempered by the variety of color and softened by the distant background which the eye can reach."

To-day the surroundings of this ancient place are not much changed. The village is now the seat of a commune in the canton of Paulhaguet, in the centre of the department of the Haute-Loire, and the little town of Brioude has become the chef-lieu of the arrondissement. The railways have penetrated its solitudes, and close by are the stations of Saint-Georges d'Aurat, Rougeac, and La Chaux,

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to this distinction. M. Doniol says of it, "A quelle époque et par quelles circonstances la seigneurie de La Fayette est-elle devenue un marquisat? On ne l'a pas découvert." (La Participation de la France, i. 676, note.)

upon the line from Langeac to Puy and to Saint-Etienne. But the old house stands there yet, somewhat grizzled perhaps by time, still looking out over the Auvergne mountains, undisturbed by the lapse of a century and more since the days when it cradled a boy whose career was destined to win the gratitude of a nation and to make its ancient walls the object of affectionate interest across the sea in the New World.

In it was born, on the 6th of September, 1757, the Marquis de La Fayette of the American Revolution, who, at his baptism upon the following day, in the little church of Chavaniac, as appears by a copy of the parish register now in the archives of the French Ministry of War, was called "très haut et très puissant seigneur, Monseigneur Marie-Joseph-Paul-Yves-Roch-Gilbert Dumotier de Lafayette, fils légitime à très haut et très puissant seigneur Monseigneur Michel-Louis-Christophle-Roch-Gilbert Dumotier, marquis de Lafayette, baron de Vissac, seigneur de Saint-Romain et autres places, et à très haute très puissante dame Madame Marie-Louise-Julie Delarivière."

His father, Colonel the Marquis de La Fayette, was dead when this son was born, having fallen at the head of his grenadiers in the little battle of Hastenbeck, on the 26th of July of that same year, 1757, when he was not as yet twenty-five years of age. La Fayette himself, in writing of it many years later, says that the grenadiers were recklessly exposed in that engagement by their commander, who, having been ordered to defend a certain point, drew them up on open ground, where they were helplessly destroyed. The Prince de Chimay, an intimate friend of his father, was killed at the head of the battalion which he commanded, and Colonel de La Fayette, who was next in rank, pressing forward to take his place, was mortally wounded by a discharge from an English battery.[1]

[1] M. de La Fayette referred to his father's death as having occurred at the battle of Minden: "Ma naissance, qui suivit de près la mort de mon père à

Thus the young Marquis de La Fayette was left at his birth alone under the protection of his mother. He found himself not only the head of his house, but also the last male representative of the long line of ancestors from whom he sprang, his father's only brother having been killed in the Italian wars without leaving issue, and the other children in the family being girls. His early years were spent at the old manor-house of Chavaniac, where his grandmother still lived, a woman of strong character and excellent principles, descended from one of the sturdy mountain races of Auvergne, the Suat de Chavaniac. She and the boy's mother, with the assistance of two aunts who came there to live, reared him with tender solicitude. They trained him to manly exercise in the development of a vigorous constitution, dreading the approach of the day when he also should become a soldier and go to the wars, and yet, by force of long family habit, unable to resist the conviction that it would surely come, and that this was, after all, but the natural and proper way for a La Fayette to bear worthily his family name and to sustain his inherited rank and station. The impressions of these early years in Auvergne sank deeply into the mind of La Fayette. He loved the place, and he spoke of it with tenderness and affection in looking back to it through the complex vicissitudes of his after-life.

The means of the family at that time were small; for, although they had landed estates, these do not appear to have been very productive. In former years their revenues from preferment at Court, or from the service of the King, had stood them in stead; but now there was nothing of this kind for them, and they were obliged to live frugally for persons of their condition.

Minden." (Mémoires de ma Main, i. 6.) But the battle of Minden was not fought until August, 1759, two years after M. de La Fayette was born. I have, therefore, followed M. Doniol (La Participation de la France, i. 656), who places the death of Colonel de La Fayette at Hastenbeck in 1757.

At the age of eleven, the young La Fayette was taken to Paris to begin his education, and was placed under the charge of the Abbé Fayon, at the Collège du Plessis, a school to which were sent at that time young gentlemen of similar rank. During the pursuit of his studies there, his mother's uncle, the Comte de La Rivière, placed him in the army lists, in order that he might secure as early as possible the advantages of military promotion. He was enrolled in the Mousquetaires, and occasionally got a holiday from school in order to be present at a review. In the mean time, his mother, anxious to secure for him all the prestige to which his family connections entitled him, had come up from her province and had been presented at Court by her aunt, who had married into the influential family of Lusignem-Lezay: so that in the course of the next few years the young Marquis, who had now grown to be a large-framed and somewhat ungainly boy, as he says himself in his Memoirs, diffident in appearing before people, acquired, through contact with the polished society of the Court, the graceful address and the cultivated manner which he retained afterward through his life.

Very soon after leaving Auvergne to go to school, he had the misfortune to lose his mother, who died in Paris in the year 1770, by which event he was left, at the age of thirteen, without near relatives with the exception of his grandmother. He was no longer poor, however, for his mother's uncle, the Comte de La Rivière, whose death occurred about this time, had made La Fayette his heir and had left to him a very large estate. Placed as he was, therefore, with rank and title at Court, with excellent conduct in his relations at college, and with more than ordinary means of his own, he became very naturally an object of interest in the society of the capital; and it was not long before it was discovered that here was a young gentleman who might be an exceedingly desira-

ble match for some one of the daughters of the families seeking at Court suitable alliances with noblemen equal in distinction with themselves. La Fayette's good fortune directed him here as it had done before: he made a connection which added to the value of his present position the influence and prestige of one of the very great families of France, that of Noailles. He married, on the 11th of April, 1774, at the hôtel de Noailles, rue St.-Honoré, Mademoiselle Marie-Adrienne-Françoise de Noailles, daughter of the Duc d'Ayen, Maréchal du Camp et Armées du Roi, afterward Duc de Noailles; and he obtained a wife who was not only to enjoy the triumph of his youth in his first successes that came very quickly thereafter, but was also to pass with him through the tempest of the French Revolution, and, in his days of grief, disappointment, and captivity, to support him with almost unequalled devotion.

Mme. de La Fayette has given us an interesting account of this courtship, in the charming narrative written by her in description of her home life and as a tribute of filial affection to the memory of her mother.[1] She says, in speaking of herself and her sister Louise, afterward Vicomtesse de Noailles, "We were scarcely twelve years old when M. de La Fayette was proposed as a husband for one of us, he himself being at that time but fourteen. His extreme youth, and the isolated character of his position, for he had lost all his near relatives and was without any one in whom he had confidence to guide him, as well as his large fortune entirely free from restrictions, which my mother considered a source of grave danger, led her, after careful consideration, to refuse him, in spite of the good reports as to his character that we heard from all those who knew him. She persisted in her refusal for several months."

[1] Notice sur Mme. la Duchesse d'Ayen, par Mme. de Lafayette, sa fille. Paris, 1869.

During this time, the Duc d'Ayen, who had selected the Marquis as his son-in-law, stoutly held out against the objections of his wife, with whom he appears actually to have quarrelled upon this subject, until finally, says Mme. de La Fayette, "after he had assured my mother that her daughter should not leave her during the first few years, and after arranging to defer the marriage for two years at least, and having taken steps to complete the education of M. de La Fayette in the mean time, she accepted him whom she afterward cherished as a most tenderly loved son, whose sterling value she learned and justly understood from the first moment that she knew him. Her consent thus obtained brought about a reconciliation between her and my father. Our joy at this event cannot be expressed in words, and the memory of that day, the 21st of September, 1772, shall never be effaced either from my heart or from my mind."

The hôtel de Noailles, the family mansion of the Duc d'Ayen, was in the rue St.-Honoré, not far from the palace of the Tuileries, upon ground now occupied by the rue d'Alger. There La Fayette lived during the first years after his marriage, like one of the children of the household, pursuing his studies as they did theirs, and going afterward, under the supervision of M. de Noailles, whose military services had brought him into close intimacy with the King and who occupied a very influential position at Court, to the military school for young noblemen called the "Académie de Versailles." There the instruction of the good Abbé Fayon was exchanged for the more practical training of a veteran officer, who took the young Marquis in charge, to give him some understanding of matters of warfare and to prepare his mind for the active career of a soldier.

Nothing could exceed the gentleness of character of the Duchesse d'Ayen, who was now a mother to the Marquis de La Fayette, or the charm of the domestic life which she

had created for her husband and her family of girls, as it is described by Mme. de La Fayette. Although her relation to the Court exacted from her that attention to social duties and to matters of entertainment which was incumbent upon her in her position as a "grande dame,"—and she fulfilled all these with scrupulous care, as she did every obligation of her life,—yet she found time every day to give her personal direction to the education and training of her children, to influence the forming of their characters as each developed toward womanhood, to watch the tendencies of each mind and to guide it toward what was right, and by her own exalted piety to set for them the standard of life which made of them all afterward excellent women. She was a splendid example of virtue and high principle amid the surroundings of the long and dissolute reign then drawing to its close. Her influence was very great upon the mind of La Fayette, toward whom she showed a loving tenderness; and he mourned her bitterly years afterward, when, during the Reign of Terror in France, she went with admirable fortitude to the guillotine, in expiation of crimes in which certainly the actions of her own life had had no part.

The first year of the married life of the Marquis de La Fayette passed merrily in the society of a very exclusive collection of young people which formed about the salons of Marie Antoinette, to which he and his wife were freely admitted, amid many balls at the palace, or entertainments at the theatre, after which the Duchesse d'Ayen was in the habit of inviting them all to take supper together at her house; although that sort of amusement was very little to his taste, partly on account of his natural diffidence and partly because his disposition was serious and led him to be reflective rather than gay. He speaks with very slight enthusiasm of "the short favor I enjoyed of a society of young people of whom I was one," of "the unfavorable impression created by my silence" and "the awkwardness

of my manners, which never could properly adjust themselves to the required graces of the Court" or to the demands made upon them by the occasion of a supper in town.[1]

The young noblemen with whom he associated at this time had a meeting-place at a café in Paris called the "Epée de Bois," where they indulged their tendency for amusement by parodies upon some of the older people of the Court, by inventing new costumes which they took it upon themselves to introduce and to oblige their elders to wear upon public occasions, thus bringing the old régime into mild ridicule, and by other inventions of the sort, which induced them upon one occasion to enact a travesty of the Parlement, then recently summoned after having been long in abeyance; an escapade in which La Fayette took a leading part, and which gave offence at the palace and came near making serious trouble for them all. After that they were separated and most of them sent to their regiments.[2] This open disrespect for the institutions of the old régime in France foreshadowed the revulsion of feeling that was about to take place in the nation after the weak and disgraceful reign of Louis XV.; it showed itself even among the younger members of the aristocracy, who looked to the accession of the new King with a certain feeling of emancipation from the burden of institutions for which they had no reverence. A desire for liberty was in the minds of men; not strong enough as yet to lead to open expression, but a desire, no doubt, that was a precursor of the Revolution which was gradually making itself felt.

La Fayette says of himself, "I was delighted with republican stories, and when my relatives secured a place for me at Court, I did not hesitate to give offence in order to maintain my independence."[3] The Maréchal de Noailles

[1] Mémoires de ma Main, i. 7.
[2] Ségur, Mémoires.
[3] Mémoires de ma Main, i. 8.

was extremely anxious to attach him to the suite of one of the royal princes, a position at that time eagerly sought after, as conferring immediate distinction at Court and opening the way to opportunities of preferment. It was distasteful, however, to La Fayette, who scorned the intrigues of the Court, and whose independent nature made it impossible for him to assume the duties and the daily life of a courtier. It embarrassed him in this case to refuse an offer made by a friend who was interested in him and who desired to do him a favor, so he determined to escape the necessity by giving offence to the Prince. He succeeded in that, and the negotiations were immediately discontinued. It is said that King Louis XVIII., the personage in question, never forgave him the insult.

It was whilst his mind was in this somewhat rebellious condition that La Fayette first heard of the event which was to play so important a part in shaping the course of his life,—the uprising in the Colonies of North America. He has referred to this in the account of himself given in the Memoirs which he wrote several years later, and which were published by his family after his death; and he narrated the story very fully to Mr. Jared Sparks in 1828, when that gentleman visited him in France for the purpose of obtaining such information as he might be able to give regarding the American Revolution to aid in the preparation of the Writings of Washington, for which Mr. Sparks was then collecting the materials.[1] All the circumstances of this incident tend to show that up to that time La Fayette knew nothing whatever of the Americans or of their struggle with the mother-country, and they have a very important bearing upon the analysis of his character and the study of his early career, as well as his relations to the American War; because they show how spontaneous and real was his enthusiasm for the

[1] Sparks, Writings of Washington, vol. v., Appendix.

cause he adopted, and how absolutely free from selfish motives was the determination which led him to espouse our interests, which made him willing, if necessary, to sacrifice his career in France, to brave the angry protests of his family, to disregard the stern admonition of his Government and run the risk of being treated as a deserter, in order that he might join his efforts to ours in the struggle for liberty. The idea of freedom appears to have aroused a feeling in his mind that brought into play the strongest impulses of his nature, and to have presented to him a conception of heroism which took complete possession of his being. He says, in writing, years afterward, of the American cause, "Never had so noble a purpose offered itself to the judgment of men! This was the last struggle of liberty; its defeat then would have left it without a refuge and without hope."[1]

He knew neither our country nor our people; he did not speak our language; it is not probable that up to that time he had ever heard the name of a single American. The story of wrong done to a brave people called forth his sympathy; their heroic struggle for independence enlisted him in their cause, and he determined to fight for them.

In the month of August, 1775, the Marquis de La Fayette was attached to the regiment "de Noailles," which was commanded by his cousin the Prince de Poix and was stationed at that time at Metz, when it happened that the Duke of Gloucester, brother of King George III. of England, who was travelling through France with his wife on his way to Italy, stopped for a day or two at Metz and was entertained by the governor, the Comte Charles François de Broglie, at a dinner to which the chief officers of the garrison were invited.[2] La Fayette was included in

[1] Mémoires de ma Main, i. 9.

[2] I have chosen to follow M. Doniol in fixing the date of this dinner in the year 1775, although Mr. Sparks, in the Appendix of vol. v. of the Writings of Washington, refers to it as having taken place in the summer of 1776. It is

the number; for, although he was not yet eighteen years of age, his rank and his connection with the powerful house of Noailles entitled him to consideration; besides which, the Comte de Broglie, himself a soldier of distinction, had been the commanding officer of La Fayette's father in the Seven Years' War, and saw him fall, and he very naturally singled out the son with a feeling of affectionate attachment.

The Duke of Gloucester, who did not agree with his brother the King in all matters, was especially opposed to his treatment of the American Colonies and to the prosecution of the war. He did not hesitate to express himself at times with considerable bitterness in this connection about the attitude of Great Britain. He even spoke occasionally in the presence of hearers to whom his words had an important bearing and by whom they were carefully reported to superiors who were constantly on the alert to detect the current of popular feeling in England and to anticipate the occurrence of political complications.

This prince, therefore, in the intimacy of a dinner-table, surrounded by a company of noblemen whose presence

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very probable that La Fayette mistook the exact date, in referring to it many years afterward in conversation with Mr. Sparks, without documents from which to refresh his memory; for his papers had all been destroyed at Chavaniac during the French Revolution. We know from other sources, however, that the Duke of Gloucester made his visit to France in 1775. There is a letter in the French Archives (Dépôt de la Guerre, vol. no. 3694; quoted by M. Doniol, La Participation de la France, t. i. p. 108), from the Prince de Montbarey to the Marquis de Castries, dated at Lille, the 30th of July, 1775, announcing the arrival of the Duke and Duchess of Gloucester, travelling as the Earl and Countess of Connaught, which says that they were going to Valenciennes, Rheims, Verdun, Metz, Nancy, Lunéville, Strassburg, Munich, Innspruck, Venice, and thence to Rome. Another letter, from the Bishop of Verdun, dated the 7th of August, 1775, to the Comte de Vergennes (Angleterre, t. 511, no. 70), informs the minister that they had been entertained by the bishop at Verdun, and adds, "Their Royal Highnesses left here yesterday afternoon at three o'clock for Metz." Also, a letter from the duke himself, dated at Strassburg, the 25th of August, 1775, thanking King Louis XVI. for his entertainment in France, shows that he was about to leave French territory at that date. (Angleterre, t. 511, no. 106.)

would naturally invite him to throw off his reserve, was not likely to be extremely careful of what he said. In connection with some letters which he had recently received from home, he began to talk of America. He explained the causes of the disagreement which had arisen between Great Britain and its Colonies, and he described the outbreak which had occurred, the fixed purpose of the King to bring the Colonists back to subjection, and the repressive measures then being determined upon in England; while, on the other hand, the Americans, he said, were opposing force by force in the defence of their rights, and from the appearance of things at that moment the war was likely to be a long one.

This conversation arrested the attention of La Fayette, who became at once intensely interested. He listened to every word that the duke uttered, and he obtained permission to satisfy the longing for information upon this subject which had suddenly sprung up in his mind, by asking numerous questions,—to which the duke replied.

The impression then made upon him was of the kind which go deep down into men's hearts and remain there forever; and it took possession of him from that moment, almost to the exclusion of every other purpose. Very many years afterward, he told Mr. Sparks that "the cause seemed to him just and noble, from the representations of the duke himself; and before he left the table the thought came into his head, that he would go to America and offer his services to a people who were struggling for freedom and independence. From that hour he could think of nothing but this enterprise, and he resolved to go to Paris to make further inquiries." [1]

Here, however, he found himself surrounded by grave and unexpected difficulties; for, in the enthusiasm which impelled him toward the object he now had in view, and

[1] Sparks, Writings of Washington, v. 445.

thinking, naturally enough, only of himself, he had unconsciously stepped upon the stage before the play was ready, and for a moment there was danger that he might seriously disturb the setting. The attitude of France toward Great Britain in the years 1775 and 1776 was one of extremely delicate adjustment. She was under the jealous and watchful eye of Lord Stormont, the British Ambassador, whom not the slightest movement escaped; who was ready at any moment to charge her Government with bad faith, or to call the ministry to account for breach of international contracts.

There was a decided sympathy on the part of the French Cabinet toward the American Colonists, through which aid had already begun to go out secretly to them from France; though the appearance of neutrality was carefully maintained, and peace continued with Great Britain. But it did not suit the plans of the Comte de Vergennes, the Secretary of State in France, to have a young French nobleman like the Marquis de La Fayette make a demonstration before the world in favor of the people whom the English nation at that time called *insurgents*, and the English Government *rebels*.

It was, perhaps, well enough if some obscure subject of the French King should escape out of one of his ports and go to America; the minister was willing to overlook that, and in fact the incident could produce no serious result. But the same procedure upon the part of a man of rank and position like La Fayette might very properly be assumed to have the sanction of the ministry, and, unless it were disavowed, must inevitably compromise the Government. La Fayette discovered this very quickly, and it greatly retarded his progress, though it did not defeat the ultimate fulfilment of his purpose.

It is not easy to follow his footsteps immediately after he left Metz to go to Paris, for his Memoirs are, unfortu-

nately, very meagre as to this part of his life. We know, however, that he kept in view the one object of going to America, though the only reference he makes to it is that "certain circumstances which it is not necessary for me to narrate led me to expect from my family nothing but opposition upon this subject;"[1] and in this he was evidently not deceived; for Mme. de La Fayette informs us, speaking particularly of the Duc d'Ayen, "My father and all my family were violently angry upon hearing of this news."[2]

La Fayette naturally confided his ambition to two of his intimate friends, the Vicomte de Noailles and the Vicomte de Ségur, who, being about the same age as himself, were inspired with a desire for glory and grew eager to join him; but, as they were not independent, as he was, and were obliged to look to their families for support, their circumstances forced them to ask permission, which was promptly refused. La Fayette then turned, with the hope of assistance, to his commander, the Comte de Broglie, to whom he confided his project. M. de Broglie received it, as all mature advisers had done, with disfavor. He told him that it was fraught with so many hazards, without the prospect of the least advantage, that he could not countenance it. "When La Fayette found him thus determined, he requested that at least he would not betray him, for he was resolved to go to America. The Comte de Broglie assured him that his confidence was not misplaced; 'but,' said he, 'I have seen your uncle die in the wars of Italy, I witnessed your father's death at the battle of Minden, and I will not be accessory to the ruin of the only remaining branch of the family.' He then used all his powers of argument and persuasion to divert La Fayette from his purpose, but in vain."[3]

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[1] Mémoires de ma Main, i. 10.

[2] Notice sur Mme. la Duchesse d'Ayen, p. 56.

[3] Sparks, Writings of Washington, v. 446.

Whilst La Fayette was not in the least deflected from his intention, his conduct at this time bears out the description given of him by his friend the Comte de Ségur, who knew him as well as, if not better than, any other of his companions at this period, when the circumstances of their lives had thrown them together and seemed to promise a future in which they saw themselves united in the same career. "His exterior," he said, "apparently so cold to one who merely saw him, concealed in reality the most active mind, the most determined character, and the most enthusiastic spirit."[1] La Fayette renewed his entreaties to the Comte de Broglie, of whom he says, "after he found that he could not stop me, he entered into my plans with a paternal kindness," and who finally consented to introduce him to the Baron de Kalb, then in Paris, also seeking an opportunity to go to North America.[2]

The Baron de Kalb, as he was called, though his proper name was Johann Kalb, was a German, somewhat over fifty years of age, who had served through several campaigns in the French army and in the Seven Years' War, and had been an officer under the command of the Duc de Broglie, by whom he had been created assistant quartermaster-general (*aide-maréchal des logis*) and had been given the rank of lieutenant-colonel. By means of the friendship he had succeeded in acquiring for himself of the Marshal Duc de Broglie and of his brother the Comte de Broglie, through his devoted attachment to them and to their interests and his constant readiness to serve them whenever they had occasion to make use of him, Kalb had found opportunity from time to time to gratify the desires of an exceedingly restless nature, and to attain, to some extent at least, the objects of a personal ambition which prevented him from leading a quiet life, such as his ample means would have enabled him to do.

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[1] Ségur, Mémoires, i. 61.

[2] Sparks, *ubi supra.*

Besides his military career, which had given him the reputation of an intelligent and reliable soldier, as he undoubtedly was, he had been employed upon one or two secret missions by the French Cabinet, through which he had come into contact with European political questions and had acquired some experience of men and of affairs. Upon one of these occasions he had been sent to Holland, and afterward the Duc de Choiseul, then Prime Minister, whose practised eye had foreseen, even long before this time, that serious trouble was about to arise between England and her Colonies, had sent him to America toward the end of the year 1767, to make a report upon the condition of feeling here.

Kalb was familiar, therefore, with our country, and he spoke English very well. He was at this time about to set out upon another secret mission, under the protection and in the interest of the Comte de Broglie, in furtherance of a plan conceived by that nobleman, by which Kalb was to return to America to join the Colonists and to take part with them as a general officer in the American army.[1] The interest he showed in America was not, however, born of any attachment that he felt for its people, or of any great sympathy with them in the struggle in which they were by this time fully engaged. His ultimate purpose was to enter a field in which he might win credit and distinction for himself, and, upon his return to Europe after the war, to obtain the promotion in the French army which he had coveted for years, but which had been denied him, very probably because as a foreigner he failed to gain advancement to the exclusion of men who, being at home, had more influence than he. Through the intervention of the Comte de Broglie at the War Department, and for the purpose of his secret mission to America in the per-

[1] For an account of this see "Le Stathoudérat du Comte de Broglie," Doniol, La Participation de la France, ii. 50; also, Dr. Charles J. Stillé, in The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography, xi. 369.

sonal interest of that gentleman, Kalb was granted a leave of absence for two years, with a promise of promotion, and he obtained subsequently, on the 6th of November, 1776, a commission of brigadier-general for the French Islands. His biographer tells us, "In France he now had little or nothing to hope for, while a wide field was opened to him on the other side of the ocean. Honor and renown invited him to try his fortunes there. He made up his mind to go; resolving, however, before preparing for his departure, to await the expected arrival in Paris of the American Agent, Silas Deane, which was delayed until the beginning of July, 1776."[1]

Shortly after this, the news of the Declaration of Independence was received in Europe, where it began to attract general attention to the war in the English Colonies, which before that, although well understood and watched with great interest by the various Cabinets in Europe, had made little impression upon the mind of the general public. The announcement, however, that England was likely to lose its grasp upon the rich possessions which it held in the New World, and the consequent loss of prestige that it was expected to suffer as an arbiter in shaping the course of European affairs, as well as the necessary weakening of its power of aggression, always regarded with unconcealed dread and suspicion, produced a violent outbreak of feeling in France.

Silas Deane wrote to Congress in November, 1776, "The rage, as I may say, for entering the American service increases, and the consequence is, that I am crowded with offers and proposals, many of them from persons of the first rank and eminence, in the sea as well as land service."[2] M. Dubois-Martin, secretary to the Comte de Broglie, writing to Kalb a few weeks later, says, "Two persons have to-day informed me that a prohibition has been published against

[1] Kapp's Life of Kalb, p. 81.

[2] Diplomatic Correspondence, Wharton, ii. 191.

discussing the war in the cafés. The precaution is a timely one, for the war is at present the subject of every conversation."[1] In November, 1776, Kalb presented himself to Mr. Deane, who immediately reported to Congress as follows: "Count Broglio, who commanded the Army of France the last War, did me the honor to call on me twice yesterday with an officer who served as his Quartermaster General the last War, and has now a regiment in his service; but being a German, and having travelled through America a few years since, he is desirous of engaging in the service of the United States of North America. I can by no means let slip an opportunity of engaging a person of so much experience, and who is by every one recommended as one of the bravest and most skillful officers in the kingdom. . . . This gentleman has an independent fortune, and a certain prospect of advancement here; but being a zealous friend to liberty, civil and religious, he is actuated by the most independent and generous principles in the offer he makes of his services to the States of America."[2] Mr. Deane thereupon engaged Kalb for the American service, with the rank of major-general, and the contract was executed on the 1st of December, 1776, Kalb engaging for himself and for fifteen officers of various grades who were to accompany him. It was intended to send him out from the port of Havre on a vessel sailing ostensibly for Santo Domingo, but in reality bound for the United States, loaded with a cargo of arms, tents, and ammunition for the *insurgents*. The enterprise failed, however, after Kalb had actually reached Havre, ready to sail, because a delay occurred in loading the vessel on account of news which arrived about that time, of reverses to the American arms; and before it could be proceeded with, Lord Stormont, who had gained information of this enterprise, made so

[1] Kapp's Life of Kalb, p. 89.

[2] Diplomatic Correspondence, Wharton, ii. 191.

vigorous a protest that the French ministry was obliged to issue an order prohibiting the expedition; in consequence of which it had to be set aside for the moment.[1]

It is at this point that Kalb's movements become of interest in the history of the Marquis de La Fayette, for Kalb turned to him for aid and encouragement in his plans. La Fayette was still bravely struggling against the obstacles that surrounded him, though he was fast approaching the time when he should equip an expedition for himself to set out to America and, as we shall see, to take with him in his following a number of the officers who intended to sail in the expedition from Havre, among whom was Johann Kalb.

It was toward the end of the year 1776 that the Comte de Broglie, in fulfilment of his promise, had introduced La Fayette to Kalb, about the time when the latter was negotiating with Silas Deane for his entry into the American service and planning for his departure as soon as possible from Havre. The appearance upon the scene of this young nobleman, possessed of family influence and family connection far beyond those of any foreigner who up to that time had openly espoused the American cause, was hailed with great satisfaction not only by Kalb, but also by Silas Deane, to whom about this time he had been presented. Although it was necessary to use great caution in holding intercourse with the American Commissioner, who, as La Fayette said, "was in Paris, but his voice was drowned by the loud protestations of Lord Stormont, and people were afraid to visit him,"[2] yet those who knew his official connection with the American Congress held very constant communication with him, and from his little house at Passy he was already carrying on an extensive traffic in arms for the Colonies, which was connived at by the French Government, to be officially denied, however,

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[1] Kapp's Kalb, p. 91.

[2] Mémoires de ma Main, i. 10.

when the British Ambassador followed up its progress too closely, to be allowed then to slumber for a short period, and to be begun again when it seemed safe. La Fayette, piloted by Kalb, escaped the danger of discovery and succeeded in obtaining an interview with Mr. Deane, to whom he explained his purpose and declared his intention of going to America. He was very kindly received by the Commissioner, though La Fayette appears to have felt that, after all, he had not much to offer him as an inducement when it was estimated at its actual value; for he said afterward, "In presenting my nineteen-year-old face to Mr. Deane, I spoke more of my zeal than of my experience; though I tried to make as much as I could out of the small excitement that my going away was likely to cause."[1] Mr. Deane saw value enough at a glance, however, in this acquisition, and did not hesitate to enter into an agreement with the young Marquis.[2]

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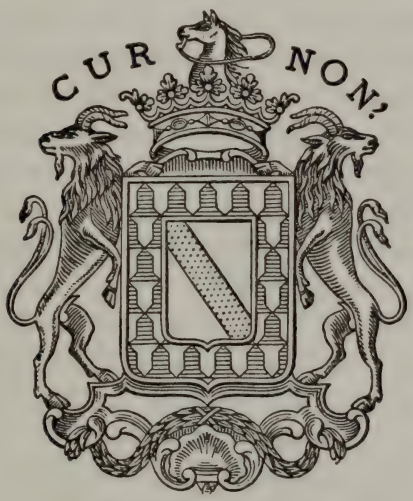
[1] Mémoires de ma Main, i. 11.

[2] Herr Kapp fixes the date of this interview (Life of Kalb, p. 87) between the 1st and the 7th of December, 1776, because the contract executed by Kalb with Mr. Deane is dated the 1st of December and La Fayette is not mentioned in it, while the contract entered into by La Fayette and Mr. Deane, in which Kalb appears as one of the parties, is dated on the 7th of that month. It appears very likely that La Fayette's contract was dated back at the time it was finally executed; for the negotiations were not concluded until some time after Kalb returned to Paris, and we know that he spent at Havre the greater part of December, from letters written to him from Paris on the 8th, 14th, and 17th of that month, and that the arrangements between him and La Fayette and Mr. Deane were not definitively closed until February, 1777. M. Doniol suggests that the selection of an earlier date was made at the instance of Mr. Deane, he having assumed the responsibility of engaging these foreign officers whilst he was the sole representative in France of the American Congress, and that "Deane, acting by himself, probably carried back the date of the contract to a time prior to that at which he learned of the arrival of Franklin, because this arrival modified his official capacity, for he executed it as 'Deputy of the American States-General.'" (La Participation de la France, ii. 380.) Dr. Franklin arrived in Paris on the 18th of December, 1776. No doubt the date of the contract was assumed for some purpose of convenience, though there is nothing in our documents to show why Kalb's first contract was dated on the 1st of December, and La Fayette's, in which he joined, on the 7th of that month.

After the interview which La Fayette had with Mr. Deane his purpose was more strongly fixed than ever, although an official prohibition had come from the ministry which covered his case and that of his two friends the Vicomte de Noailles and the Vicomte de Ségur. M. de Noailles, hoping to overcome the objections of his family to his going to America, had applied directly to the War Office for a commission to serve as an officer in the army of the American Colonies, to which application the Prime Minister, M. de Maurepas, replied that he was not aware of the entry of French officers into the service of the English Colonies. A step of this kind would be an act of hostility, assuredly opposed to the wishes of the King. The King, he said, was greatly pleased at the evidence of zeal shown by the Vicomte de Noailles, but he must not think of going to America. Whereupon M. de Noailles and M. de Ségur were obliged to abandon their project, "consternés," as Ségur says, at this turn in affairs, and mortified at the loss of an opportunity to assert their military talents from which they had hoped to win honor and glory.[1] But La Fayette determined to face the prohibition alone, and M. Dubois-Martin, secretary to the Comte de Broglie, wrote on the 8th of December to Kalb, who was still at Havre, expecting to sail for America in a few days, "Our young Marquis does not despair; he still has the greatest desire to go. M. de Noailles, having renounced his own designs, will probably endeavor to dissuade the Marquis from adhering to his, in which attempt he will, of course, be seconded by his family. The latest news, which occupies all the world here, is the arrival of Mr. Franklin at Nantes. He will set out for Paris tomorrow." Instead of allowing himself to be influenced, however, as M. Dubois-Martin suspected he might, into giving up his design and returning quietly to his regi-

[1] Ségur, Mémoires.

ment, which was indeed what his family earnestly wished him to do, La Fayette set before himself a reminder of the glory of his ancestors as a spur to his own strength of purpose and his desire to follow worthily after those sturdy soldiers in their long history of military prowess in which no La Fayette was ever known to turn back. He selected as his device for the arms he bore, as Marquis de La Fayette, that of the famous marshal of his name who loyally served the King against his enemies in the fifteenth century, the words *Cur Non?* assuming it, as he says, "in order that they might serve me both as an encouragement and a response," at a time when all his impulses carried him in one direction and all the influences about him strove to turn him into another.[1]



THE ARMS OF LA FAYETTE.

In the mean time, Kalb, who had returned to Paris from Havre, renewed his connection with the Marquis de La Fayette, who had been following with great interest the progress of Kalb's expedition, and who now received

[1] The former device was, "Vis sat contra fatum."

him after its failure with many expressions of sympathy and regret. He declared that he was willing to make a trial himself, even if it involved the fitting out of an expedition at his own expense, and he assured Kalb that he should never give up until he had succeeded in going to America; whereupon Kalb's spirits were revived by the hope that he might yet by this means carry out his own designs. He proposed to La Fayette that they should go together to see the Comte de Broglie, who was, as we have seen, sincerely attached to the young Marquis. He was Kalb's patron in his undertaking, though there is no evidence that La Fayette knew it or even suspected that the Comte de Broglie had ambitious designs himself in connection with the American Revolution in furtherance of which he was sending out Kalb as his agent. La Fayette has not mentioned it in any of his writings, and the Kalb papers through which Herr Kapp was first to throw light upon the obscure details of this transaction contain nothing that indicates his acquaintance with it. They went together to Ruffec, the country-seat of the Comte de Broglie, with whom they spent two or three days in discussing the plan which La Fayette proposed to adopt. At the conclusion of this visit it was agreed "that the voyage to America must be made, in spite of all obstacles,"[1] and, having discussed the question how this might be done, they decided that La Fayette should buy a ship and a cargo at once.

The news from America at this time continued to be more and more discouraging, and reports were current in France that General Washington's army had been annihilated by the British, that his whole force was reduced to three thousand troops, and that the British commander, having driven him out of New York and Long Island, was pursuing him with an army of thirty thousand men

[1] Kapp's Kalb, p. 100.

through New Jersey. Even the American Commissioners, in the uncertainty of the moment, when it was impossible to decide how much truth there might be in these stories of disaster at home, sent word to La Fayette that, under the circumstances, it seemed better to them that he should postpone his undertaking. But he went at once to see Mr. Deane, and, after thanking him for the frankness with which he had pointed out the dangers of an expedition, said to him, "Heretofore I have been able to show you only my willingness to aid you in your struggle: the time has now come when that willingness may be put to effective use, for I am going to buy a ship and to take your officers out in it. Let us not give up our hope yet; it is precisely in time of danger that I want to share whatever fortune may have in store for you." [1]

He took steps immediately to put into execution his plan of securing a ship, which was an exceedingly difficult thing to do without discovery upon the part of the British Ambassador, whose agents were closely watching every port, and who, upon the slightest intimation that an expedition of this character was fitting out, would have made such representations as to oblige the French ministry to forbid it. So great, indeed, was this danger that La Fayette did not dare to visit Dr. Franklin, who was then in Paris. He was enabled to communicate with him, however, through the mediation of Mr. Carmichael, the secretary to the American Commissioners, who, being less known as an agent of the Colonies, was less likely to attract attention; [2] and by this means he obtained the approval both of Dr. Franklin and of Mr. Deane, whom he kept constantly informed of the progress he was making. He decided, after careful reflection, that Bordeaux would be a safer place for him to negotiate in than any northern port of France, because it was more remote and conse-

[1] Mémoires de ma Main, i. 12.

[2] Ibid.

quently less carefully watched by Lord Stormont's people, and he turned in that direction to find the ship he sought.

For this purpose there happened to be at hand a man exactly suited to the business, in the person of Lieutenant François Dubois-Martin, brother to the Comte de Broglie's secretary, who was attached to one of the King's regiments then stationed at Port-au-Prince. M. Dubois-Martin had come to France shortly before that time, commissioned to buy uniforms for his regiment; he had executed this commission at Bordeaux, and had then gone to Paris to see his brother before returning to his post. During his visit there he heard of the expedition which Kalb intended to take to North America, and upon expressing a great desire to join it he was enrolled, with the rank of major, among the officers who were to sail from Havre. After the ministerial prohibition and the consequent failure of the enterprise, Dubois-Martin had gone again to visit his brother, and he was now upon the point of starting for the West Indies. La Fayette picked out this man as the agent whom he required; he had had some business experience in making purchases for his regiment, and in addition to that he had dealt at Bordeaux in this connection, so that he had a certain familiarity with that city and its merchants, which was, of course, very necessary in carrying out a delicate mission of this kind. Dubois-Martin—"le petit Dubois," as he was called by the Comte de Broglie—set out at once for Bordeaux, where he very soon made arrangements for a vessel and reported his success to La Fayette. The merchants from whom he bought the ship were Messrs. Reculès de Basmarins, Raimbaux et Cie.; the vessel was commanded by one Captain le Boursier, and it was called La Victoire; under the agreement, it was to be delivered by the middle of March, 1777. The price agreed upon by Dubois was one hundred and twelve thousand francs for the ship and the cargo, one-quarter of which La Fayette was to pay in

cash, and the remainder in fifteen months from the date of delivery.

During the interval between the date of the purchase of his vessel and the time of its delivery a few weeks later, La Fayette employed his leisure by fulfilling a promise made by him to visit in London his uncle the Marquis de Noailles, then the Ambassador of France to the Court of St. James. He went in company with the Prince de Poix, and stayed in England three weeks, during which, as a representative nobleman from the French Court, introduced by the Ambassador, he was received with distinguished attention in English society and was also presented to King George.[1] He has been criticised by English writers for this visit to England at a time when he knew that he was about to take up arms against that country; but the engagement to go there had been made by him some time previously, and if he had declined at this time to fulfil it he could not have given a sufficient excuse to the Marquis de Noailles, who was expecting him, and who, as La Fayette assured Mr. Sparks, knew nothing of his plans about the American War. "I could not decline the invitation without exposing my secret, and by accepting it I was able to divert attention from the preparations I was then making." He was fully conscious, however, of what he owed to himself as an honorable man, and during the time he was in London he scrupulously avoided any act that could lead him into a position such as he ought not to occupy, or that could give him any information which he had no right to; and, as he afterward said, if he indulged himself in the pleasure that a boy of nineteen might naturally feel in standing before King George, in going to the house of Lord George Germain, Secretary for the Colonies, and in meeting at the opera Sir Henry Clinton, whom he was afterward to meet at Monmouth,

[1] Mémoires de ma Main, i. 13; Sparks, Writings of Washington, v. 447.

yet he strictly refused to visit any of the seaports where preparations were being made for the war, especially the harbor of Portsmouth, where he was invited to see an armament then fitting out to go to America. At the end of three weeks he went back to Paris, but, not wishing to arouse the suspicions of his relatives by his return, he concealed himself at Kalb's house in Chaillot, then a suburb of Paris, where he "remained three days and saw the Americans and a few friends," and it was during this time that he made his final arrangements for setting out.

The contract which he entered into with Mr. Deane in regard to his serving in the American army, and the rank he was to be given, as well as the various grades of the officers whom he agreed to take with him in his ship, are as follows:[1]

"*List of Officers of Infantry and Light Troops Destined to Serve in the Armies of the States-General of North America.*

Name of Officers.	Rank.	Commencement of their Pay.
M. de la Fayette,	Major-general,	December 7, 1776.
Baron de Kalb,	do.	November 7, 1776.
Delesser,	Colonel,	December 7, 1776.
De Valfort,	do.	do.
De Fayols,	Lieutenant-colonel,	November 20, 1776.
De Franval,	do.	December 1, 1776.
Dubois Martin,	Major,	November 7, 1776.
De Gimat,	do.	December 1, 1776.
De Vrigny,	Captain,	do.
De Bedaulx,	.....	.....
Capitaine,	Captain,	December 1, 1776.
De la Colombe,	Lieutenant,	do.
Candon,	do.	November 7, 1776.

"The mentioned ranks and the pay, which the most honorable Congress shall affix to them, to commence at the periods marked

[1] Diplomatic Correspondence, Wharton, ii. 220.

in the present list, have been agreed to by us the undersigned, Silas Deane, in quality of Deputy of the American States-General, on the one part, the Marquis de la Fayette and the Baron de Kalb on the other part. Signed double at Paris this 7th of December, 1776.

"DE KALB,
"THE MARQUIS DE LA FAYETTE,
"SILAS DEANE."

Annexed to the foregoing contract is this special agreement with La Fayette:

"The desire which the Marquis de la Fayette shows of serving among the troops of the United States of North America, and the interest which he takes in the justice of their cause, make him wish to distinguish himself in this war, and to render himself as useful as he possibly can; but not thinking that he can obtain leave of his family to pass the seas and serve in a foreign country, till he can go as a general officer, I have thought I could not better serve my country, and those who have entrusted me, than by granting to him, in the name of the very honorable Congress, the rank of major-general, which I beg the States to confirm to him, to ratify, and deliver to him the commission to hold and take rank, to count from this day, with the general officers of the same degree. His high birth, his alliances, the great dignities which his family hold at this Court, his considerable estates in this realm, his personal merit, his reputation, his disinterestedness, and, above all, his zeal for the liberty of our provinces, are such as have only been able to engage me to promise him the rank of major-general in the name of the United States. In witness of which I have signed the present this 7th of December, 1776.

"SILAS DEANE,
"Agent for the United States of America."

"On the conditions here explained I offer myself, and promise to depart when and how Mr. Deane shall judge proper, to serve the United States with all possible zeal, without any pension or particular allowance, reserving to myself the liberty of returning to Europe when my family or my king shall recall me.

"Done at Paris, this 7th of December, 1776.

"THE MARQUIS DE LA FAYETTE."[1]

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[1] We have already referred to the fact that the contract made by Mr. Deane with the Marquis de La Fayette and the Baron de Kalb was not executed

La Fayette decided that, in order to set out from France without being restrained by the entreaties of his relatives or the commands of the Government, he must go secretly, without even taking leave of his family. This was all the more trying for him because he loved his young wife tenderly and had one child, a daughter, a little over a year old, both of whom it seemed cruel to leave without one last embrace before starting upon an expedition fraught with great peril and from which he might never return. But he was well aware that this was his only course; for the Duc d'Ayen would certainly have had him arrested and placed under orders from the King expressly forbidding him to go to America, if he had by any chance discovered that La Fayette seriously contemplated such a step. He wrote the following letter to announce his

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until some time in February, 1777, though it bears date the 7th of December, 1776, and we have called attention to M. Doniol's theory as to the cause of its having been thus dated back. What appears to be extremely probable, from a consideration of all the circumstances, is that the agreement here given between Mr. Deane and La Fayette alone was made soon after the Marquis first met the Commissioner, when he had as yet no definite plan of going to America; because he declares in it his willingness "to depart when and how Mr. Deane shall judge proper." This date would be, according to Herr Kapp, between the 1st and the 7th of December; for he fixes the meeting between these two dates because La Fayette is mentioned in the contract made on the 7th of the month and not in that of the 1st. This may, however, be incorrect; for we shall see below that Mr. Deane said, "It was executed in November last, long before their [his colleagues'] arrival." When La Fayette executed his contract with Mr. Deane in conjunction with Kalb, he had already bought his vessel and cargo, and was able to insert in the document the names of the officers whom he intended to take with him to America. It is most likely that at the execution of this final agreement the contract originally made with Kalb was modified to suit the change that had taken place in his plans, and the written understanding first had by Mr. Deane with the Marquis de La Fayette was redated, or, possibly, re-executed, at the same time; the two documents having been then united to make substantially one contract, bearing date the 7th of December, 1776. M. Doniol's suggestion as to the dating back of the instrument would accord entirely with this; for we shall see that Mr. Deane says of his agreement with La Fayette, "My colleagues have had no knowledge of it," thus bearing out the idea that he acted alone and wished to fix the date at a time before Dr. Franklin reached Paris.

departure, which, although dated in London, was not delivered to the Duc d'Ayen until La Fayette had left Paris to join his vessel at Bordeaux:[1]

"London, 9 March, 1777.

"You will be surprised, my dear papa, at what I am about to tell you. It has been harder for me than I can express, not to have consulted you before; my respect for you, my affection and my confidence in you, must convince you of this; but my word had been given, and I was bound by it. I am sure you would not have respected me if I had been false to that; so that I hope the step I am now going to take will give you at least a good opinion of my right intentions. I have found a singularly good opportunity to distinguish myself and to gain experience in my profession. I am now a general officer in the army of the United States of America. They have lent me their confidence in return for the openness of my conduct and the great interest I have taken in their cause; while, on my side, I have done everything I could for them; and their welfare will always be as dear to me as my own. In a word, my dear father, I am now awaiting in London news from my friends; and as soon as it arrives I shall set out from here, and, without stopping in Paris, I shall go aboard a vessel which I have loaded and which belongs to me. My companions in the expedition are the Baron de Kalb, an officer of the highest distinction, brigadier in the army of the King and major-general in the service of the United States, like myself, and some excellent officers who are ready to share the fortune of my adventures. I am filled with joy at having found so good an opportunity to increase my experience and to do something in the world. I know very well that I am making an immense sacrifice, and it will be harder for me than for any one to leave my family, my friends, and you, my dear father, because I love you all more than any one ever loved before. But, after all, this voyage is not a long one; people go farther every day for the sole pleasure of travelling; and, besides, I hope I shall return from it better deserving the esteem of everybody who is kind enough to miss me during my absence. Good-by, my dear father. I hope to see you soon again. Do not withdraw your affection from me, for I earnestly long to deserve it, and I do deserve it by the love I have for you and the respect I shall continue to bear for you all my life. Your affectionate son,

"La Fayette."

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[1] Correspondance de La Fayette, i. 82.

This letter was received by the Duc d'Ayen with disappointment and chagrin. He went at once to the ministry with the news, and presented the case so forcibly that an order was issued directing La Fayette to return to his duty, and couriers were sent after him on the road to Bordeaux, whither it was learned he had gone. Mme. de La Fayette was greatly distressed at hearing of her husband's departure, though she showed that confidence in him which never waned, and the courage which always, through the severe trials of their after-life, bore witness to her patience and her womanly steadfastness. Her mother, the Duchesse d'Ayen, encouraged and supported her in this; for she alone of all the family took the side of La Fayette and foresaw that he had enlisted in a cause that was worthy of him and was likely one day to bring him honor. Mme. de La Fayette says[1] that, in spite of the anger of her father and all the family, "my mother, anxious for the effect of it upon me, was herself distressed by the thought of the danger and the separation from a son whom she loved so tenderly; and yet, although she was the last person in the world to be led by ambition, by the thirst for glory, or by the love of enterprise, she judged the undertaking of M. de La Fayette at that time as it was judged two years afterward by every one else. She broke to me herself the news of this cruel separation, and consoled me by seeking every opportunity to help M. de La Fayette, with that nobleness of mind and that elevation of character which were the moving impulses of her nature."

In the mean time, La Fayette and Kalb had left Paris on the night of the 16th of March, 1777, for Bordeaux, where they arrived on the 19th, having travelled three days by post.

The biographer of Kalb has thought it wise to reject the account of the difficulties of this part of the journey

[1] Vie de la Duchesse d'Ayen, p. 56.

as they are described by La Fayette himself in his "Mémoires" and by Mr. Jared Sparks,[1] out of "a due regard for the truth of history," as Herr Kapp says, "because the ministers, instead of opposing, connived at the journey of Kalb and La Fayette so far as their position allowed them to do so. La Fayette says as much himself, when, in the year 1800, he writes to Madame Geymueller, the daughter of his friend, 'His [Kalb's] departure was favored by the Comte de Broglie and secretly sanctioned by the French Government.' What was true of Kalb must apply to La Fayette, for they travelled together." But this last statement is not historically correct. There was a very wide difference between the two men and between their relations to the French Government. Kalb, a foreigner in the French service, was going to America as the agent of the Comte de Broglie, in the furtherance of ambitious plans which the Count desired to have carried out if possible; and, with this in view, the latter had not only used his influence at the War Office to obtain for Kalb a leave of absence for two years, but had secured a promotion for him as a reward for going.

Unquestionably the departure of Kalb, so far as it attracted any official attention whatever, was connived at by the French Government, as was probably also the departure of the other officers who engaged with Silas Deane to accompany him in the expedition; for, after all, the ministers were very friendly to the Americans, and were quite willing, as we know, to lend them any assistance that they could without exciting the hostility of Great Britain. But the Marquis de La Fayette was a man of very great prominence, whose open declaration in favor of the *insurgents* by going to America to fight for them was sure to attract public attention. It was likely to embarrass the ministry at an extremely critical moment, and

[1] Mémoires de ma Main, i. 14; Sparks, Writings of Washington, v. 448.

there was danger that this act might gravely compromise the French Ambassador in London, La Fayette's kinsman, under whose protection he had, only a few days before, been presented at the English Court. His case, from its very nature, could not be connived at; not because the ministers did not sympathize with any attempt that might aid the Americans and damage England, but because the particular circumstances of the Marquis de La Fayette obliged them to act.

The Duc d'Ayen regarded La Fayette's project as an act of folly, not to call it a disgrace, and he went to the Comte de Vergennes with all the intensity of his family pride aroused, determined that he would prevent it. Appealed to thus openly in the case of an officer of the King's army—for La Fayette was captain in the regiment de Noailles—about to go abroad without leave, there was no course left to the Government but to warn him not to quit the kingdom, and, above all, not to go to America to fight against King George, with whom His Most Christian Majesty was at peace. Therefore La Fayette's difficulties were real. A *lettre-de-cachet* was despatched after him, which the Marquis says was "peremptory." It forbade him to go to the American continent, under pain of disobedience, and he was ordered to Marseilles for further instructions.[1] His departure from Paris created an extraordinary feeling, especially among his younger friends, who sympathized with him in an adventure which many of them would gladly have shared. He became the object of general interest, almost a hero, in the conversations of the cafés, the salons, and the theatres; and one lady is reported to have exclaimed, in her admiration for him, that if the Duc d'Ayen treated so badly a splendid young man like La Fayette, he need not expect to marry the rest of his daughters.[2]

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[1] Mémoires de ma Main, i. 14.

[2] Vie de Mme. de Lafayette, par Mme. de Lasteyrie, sa fille, p. 197, note.

But the attitude of the Government gave rise to considerable uneasiness among the associates of the Marquis de La Fayette, lest the undertaking might result in trouble for him and possibly even be looked upon as a subject of offence on the part of those who had been instrumental in aiding him to carry it out. There is evidence of this in a letter which Mr. Deane felt it necessary to write to M. Gérard, Secretary of the Foreign Office, as follows:

"Sir,—You have enclosed two original letters from the Baron du Kalb, which please to present to his Excellency the Comte de Vergennes, and tell him I refer to my uniform conduct to justify what I have had the honor of relating to you this evening; as to facts, Moñs. Comte de Broglio has received this evening a letter from Moñs. le Marquis de Lafayette which he will communicate. I refer to that Nobleman, and am willing to rely on his relation of this affair, for my justification, more, for my approbation, since to gain a most gallant and amiable young Nobleman to espouse our cause, and to give to the world a specimen of his native and hereditary bravery, surely cannot be deemed criminal. I have nothing to add to what I have had the honor of relating to you personally upon this subject, except that I rely on the Comte de Broglio to explain any and every part of my conduct in this affair,—that my colleagues have had no knowledge of it, as it was executed in November last, long before their arrival, and that I shall do everything in my power to satisfy every one that my conduct has been strictly honourable. I have the honor to be your most obedt. and very humble servant.

"S. Deane.

"Apl. 2, 1777."

This letter was evidently not delivered, and it was readdressed by Mr. Deane the next day with the accompanying note:

"Sir,—I sent the inclosed last evening a few minutes after you left Paris, and therefore now send my servant express with it. I cannot but feel uneasy untill I have fully vindicated my conduct in this affair; and therefore ask you not only to inform him that I rely upon him, to shew these letters, if necessary, in my justifi-

[1] French Archives, États-Unis, t. 2, No. 89: Doniol, La Participation de la France, ii. 392.

cation, to his Majesty and his other ministers. I have the honor to remain with the utmost respect, Sir, your most obedt. and very humble servt.—

"SILAS DEANE.

"PARIS, 3 April, 1777."

This proves beyond question that the departure of La Fayette was not regarded with indifference by the Cabinet or looked upon in the same light as that of Kalb and the others who accompanied him, that the orders of the Government were not merely formal, and that his going was not connived at. Mr. Silas Deane was probably better informed than any one else, outside of the Cabinet itself, as to the policy of the French Government in regard to the American Colonies. He was in constant intercourse with the ministry upon this subject; indeed, he was present in France as a Commissioner of the United States Congress, secretly recognized by the Comte de Vergennes, and the agent through whom negotiations were carried on, until the end of the year 1776, for the shipments of arms and munitions of war which were then being made. And yet Mr. Deane was alarmed at the evident disapproval of the conduct of La Fayette on the part of the King and his ministers; he was fearful that in this matter he had gone one step too far, and that he might have damaged, instead of helping as he had intended to do, the cause of the United States in France: he therefore hastened to clear his colleagues from any responsibility in the contract with La Fayette, and to assure M. de Vergennes of his honesty of purpose and his friendship toward France. He wrote again, a few days later, directly to the Comte de Vergennes, in transmitting to him some despatches which he had just received from the Congress:

"PARIS, 5th Apl., 1777.

"SIR,—I have the honor of enclosing to Your Excellency, agreeable to my promise to Mr. Gérard, copies of my letters respecting Mons. La Fayette, which I hope will be agreeable, and can only say, I have felt much on the occasion for the delicate

honor of the Marquiss, lest some report injurious to him should be spread, in either country;—no country need be ashamed of him, and I am sure he will one day justify to the world that my early prejudices in his favor were well founded." [1]

At all events, the King issued a general order through the Ministry of War, which was signed by himself, forbidding any of his officers to take service in the English Colonies, and enjoining such as should arrive in the Islands of America with that purpose in view, "especially the Marquis de La Fayette," to return at once to France; and secret instructions were sent to the wardens in all the seaports to watch carefully all vessels sailing thence, to search them if necessary, and to prevent the shipment of arms and munitions of war to North America.

The Marquis de Noailles, the French Ambassador at London, who felt very keenly the discomfort of the position in which he had been placed by this incident, hastened to write to M. de Maurepas, the Prime Minister:

"London, 8 April, 1777.

"I learned yesterday, M. le Comte, with extreme surprise, through my letters from Paris, that M. de La Fayette has gone to America. Fortunately for him, his youth may shield him from the responsibility of his thoughtless acts. This is the only consolation left to me in the chagrin I feel in view of his most inconsiderate behavior. There is no doubt that his plans were made before he came to London, where he spent some fifteen days at the end of February and the beginning of March; though I wish now that he had intimated to me, even in the most remote way, the voyage upon which he has just started out. I should have had no difficulty in bringing him back to reason, for I should have given him a better understanding of the principles of emulation and of honor, of which he is following now only the idea and not the real substance or the true precepts. He left here a week or ten days before M. de Poix, with whom he came. I asked him his reason for going away, but I was entirely satisfied when he told me that no bad news of any kind was taking him back to France. He

[1] French Archives, Etats-Unis, t. 2, No. 93: Doniol, La Participation de la France, ii. 393.

concealed his intentions from his travelling companion, from me, and from everybody; of that there is no doubt in my mind. His presentation at Court here could serve him in no other way than in the fulfilment of a duty which I required of him. It is evident that, with no one but himself to consult, he did not realize, by very much indeed, the consequences of what he was about to do. I confess that if he had seen fit not to come to London to extend his carnival, I should be free to-day from at least one source of regret; for I should not be reminded that I had the honor of presenting him to the King of England only a moment before he started out in this most extraordinary proceeding." [1]

The Ambassador was, of course, not held in the least responsible for any part of the affair, and indeed very little more was said of it in the despatches; the Comte de Vergennes merely adding, in his own hand, at the end of an official communication, "It is with great regret, M. le Marquis, that I mention to you M. le M[is] de La Fayette. His age may perhaps justify his escapade; but I am truly sorry, not only for the interest that you and the Duc d'Ayen have in the matter, but also because I am afraid he may fall in with some English man-of-war, and, not being distinguished from the mass of adventurers who come into their hands, may be treated with a harshness not entirely unknown to that nation."

If the minister had nothing more serious to communicate than his personal fears that something unpleasant might happen to La Fayette, of course M. de Noailles found no further cause to disturb his mind; though he did not quite lose sight of the subject, for he wrote home that Lord Suffolk had said to him, with a rather malicious expression upon his face, "The winds have been pretty good during the last few days for vessels sailing from England to America;" by which, the Marquis said, he did not know whether he meant that, in spite of all obstacles thrown in the way by France, England would not give

[1] Angleterre, t. 522, fol. 370: Doniol, La Participation de la France, ii. 396.

up her purpose of subduing the Colonies, or whether he merely wanted to draw out some expression in regard to a person closely allied to him who had recently gone to join the American army.

But the Ambassador added that he felt very much more at ease, afterward, when he heard that the Comte de Banklay, maréchal-de-camp in the army of the French King, had arrived in London and had petitioned his British Majesty to be allowed to go to America and serve as a volunteer in the army of General Howe, continuing, "They have no longer any ground to reproach us with partiality, since we can point to the example of a general officer who is willing to make all sorts of sacrifices to espouse the cause of England in one of the most serious quarrels she has ever had." This extraordinary offer of M. de Banklay's was actually made in the month of May, 1777, and was rejected by Lord George Germain with a polite cynicism which certainly could not have encouraged any one else to follow the example. Having expressed the high appreciation with which the King had learned of M. de Banklay's attachment to the English cause, he continued, "The situation of affairs in America and the character of the war now being carried on there would make it impossible for the commander-in-chief to show you the attention due to your rank and your personal merit. His Majesty, therefore, prefers to forego the advantage he should gain from your service rather than to expose you to what might be inconvenient or disagreeable." M. Doniol testifies that this is the only case of the kind that occurred in France during the war.[1] In the mean time, the latest courier from Versailles had brought the Marquis de Noailles a letter from M. de Vergennes telling him that he need have no further solicitude about his nephew, because "M. de La Fayette has been most

[1] Angleterre, t. 523, No. 47 : Doniol, La Participation de la France, ii. 399.

fortunately overtaken by the King's messenger at San Sebastian; he has respected the order of the King, and has immediately returned."

La Fayette, having reached Bordeaux, in company with Kalb, on the 19th of March, 1777, discovered that his movements were known at Court and that the King's order would issue for his arrest. As he knew that it was likely to overtake him forthwith if he remained in France, he determined to put out with his ship as soon as it could be made ready, and, going to the nearest port in Spain, to await there the ship's papers.[1] But he was delayed several days by the final preparations for his vessel to go to sea, during which time he sent a messenger to Paris to learn the latest news and to see if possibly the interdict might be removed.

Kalb wrote to his wife from Bordeaux on the 20th of March, "There is still a possibility that our departure may be prevented. I find so many matters still to be arranged that the minister will receive notice of the journey of the Marquis in time for his prohibitory order to arrive before we go to sea. Notwithstanding the ardor with which we are at work, nothing is more uncertain than this voyage. At this moment a courier has been despatched to ascertain the effect produced by the news of our proceedings and to prevent an interdict from issuing." And on the 23d of March he wrote, "We are still ignorant whether our departure will not be prevented, as our vessel, so long detained already, cannot go out into the stream before to-morrow."[2]

They finally went aboard La Victoire, however, on the night of the 25th of March; and Kalb wrote again to his wife, on the morning of the 26th, "In two hours we shall be in the open sea. We are weighing anchor in the most glorious weather. I shall certainly write you again before

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[1] Sparks, Writings of Washington, v. 448.

[2] Kapp's Kalb, 104.

my arrival in America, because we have to enter a European port, and shall probably wait at San Sebastian for the return of a courier sent to Paris."

By the laws of France at that time, it was necessary for every passenger on a vessel going out of a French port to obtain a certificate, signed by the proper official, setting forth the place of his birth, his age, his general appearance, and his destination. M. Doniol, who leaves no stone unturned under which he is likely to discover the information he seeks, has dug out of the papers of the Admiralty, preserved in the Tribunal de Commerce at Bordeaux, the record of these certificates or permits issued in 1777 to the Marquis de La Fayette, Kalb, and their companions. That of La Fayette is dated "at Bordeaux, the 22d March, 1777," and he is described as "S^{r} Gilbert du Mottie, Chevalier de Chavaillac, agé de 20 ans, taille haute, cheveux blond," who is about to embark on "La Victoire, Cap^{e} Lebourcier, pour aller au Cap où ils vont pour affaires."[1] It includes the names of some other members of his following, and is signed by him as Gilbert du Motier, using his family name and his title of "Chevalier de Chavaniac," by which he was probably not known except in his native province. Both of these were evidently spelled in the certificate by an official who knew none too much about orthography and who cared nothing whatever about the particular subjects of the King whose names he was then inscribing.[2]

After leaving Bordeaux, the Victoire was headed for the Spanish coast, and very soon arrived at Los Pasajes, a little harbor on the Bay of Biscay, in the province of Guipuzcoa, a few miles to the east of San Sebastian and only a short distance from the French frontier. Upon going ashore, La Fayette discovered that his troubles were

[1] Doniol, La Participation de la France, ii. 384.

[2] See these interesting certificates, as given by M. Doniol, La Participation de la France, ii. 384, 419, 420.

not yet ended. The two officers who had been sent after him from Versailles with the King's *lettre-de-cachet* had followed by land from Bordeaux, and presented the order to him at Los Pasajes. At the same time, letters came to him from the ministers and from some members of his family, insisting upon his return. The *lettre-de-cachet* commanded him to proceed to Marseilles and to wait there for further orders. The letters from the ministers charged him with violating his oath of allegiance to the King and with rashly committing an act which might involve the Government with other Powers. His family censured him in a tone of pointed reprimand, assuring him that his conduct, if persisted in, would ruin both them and himself.[1] This is what La Fayette related upon the subject, in 1828, to Mr. Sparks, who adds to the foregoing, "It must be observed, however, that his wife did not join in this outcry; she approved of his enterprise from the beginning, and threw no obstacles in his way. The family were preparing for a tour in Italy, and the design was that he should meet them at Marseilles, go with them on this tour, and thus be diverted from his American project."

Kalb's annoyance at this delay increased daily, as did also his fear that his own ambition might yet be defeated and that he might be prevented from going to America this time, as he had been before. He wrote to his wife, on the 28th of March, "It will not be necessary to wait here for the return of the courier sent to Paris, because another has been sent to us from Bordeaux, who came here yesterday. He brought the orders of the *Court* commanding the Marquis to repair to Toulon, there to await the arrival of the Duc d'Ayen and the Comtesse de Tessé, his sister, and to travel with them to Italy. This is the end of his expedition to America to join the army of the insurgents. He is at this moment leaving for Bor-

[1] Sparks, Writings of Washington, v. 448.

deaux, whence, if possible, he will proceed to Paris, being loath to go to Italy. I am now obliged to wait for the courier whom La Fayette is to send to me, either from Bordeaux, if, on obtaining from the commandant of that place more satisfactory information of the King's commands, he finds it necessary to abandon the journey, or from Paris, if he is permitted to go there and then fails in securing the consent of the Duc d'Ayen to his proceeding. Time will hang heavy on my hands here in the mean time. I do not believe he will be able to rejoin me, and have advised him to compromise with the owner of the ship at a sacrifice of twenty or twenty-five thousand francs." [1]

Kalb underestimated, however, the force of character and the determination of the young gentleman whose courage he so readily disposed of. This was not by any means "the end of his expedition," though, it must be confessed, it was rather a staggering blow, for it brought to bear upon him at the same moment all the force of duty to the King and of affection for his family, either of which had always hitherto been the signal for unhesitating obedience in the mind of La Fayette. He determined to go back to France with the officers who bore the King's order, to report himself to the commandant at Bordeaux, and to make a further effort to release himself from the prohibitions by which his steps were now beset. Accordingly, he started for Bordeaux at once, by land, taking the road which leads through St.-Jean-de-Luz.

"The letters of my family were terrible," he said, in speaking of it several years afterward, and although "the consequences of the anathema, the laws of the realm, the authority and the anger of the Government, influenced me to take this step, yet far more so did the grief and the pregnancy of my dearly loved wife and the thought of my family and friends." [2] He presented himself, therefore, to

[1] Kapp's Kalb, 104.

[2] Mémoires de ma Main, i. 14.

M. de Fumel, the commandant at Bordeaux, and made a formal declaration that he alone would be answerable for the consequences of his evasion, for he began to feel assured now that there was very little hope of his obtaining permission to go, especially after receiving a letter from his intimate friend the Vicomte de Coigny, who wrote from Versailles that there was much excitement against him at Court, that the British Ambassador had made strong representations, and that there was not the remotest prospect of his receiving a favorable reply.[1] Thereupon La Fayette decided to go to America, come what might. Whilst he was at Bordeaux, following up the circumstances which led him to this conclusion, Kalb was still aboard La Victoire in Los Pasajes, growing constantly more impatient as the days went by without bringing him the tidings he was expecting from the Marquis. He occupied the time which was, as he had foreseen, "hanging heavy on his hands," by writing letters to his wife which show that his disappointment had produced a feeling of irritation toward La Fayette, whom he blames almost in the same breath for not having abandoned the expedition altogether and for not having proceeded with it in spite of remonstrance from anybody. But his letters are interesting in this connection, and they are also extremely important in the history of La Fayette, because they are, as to many incidents of the voyage which they narrate, the only documents which we now possess. He wrote to her on the 6th of April, a little less than a week after La Fayette had left him to go to Bordeaux,[2] "I had flattered myself with the hope of receiving news from the Marquis from Bordeaux last evening. If they do not arrive to-day or to-morrow, our stay here will be a very long one, as in that case he will not write until he gets to Paris; for certainly neither M. de Maurepas nor the Duc

[1] Sparks, Writings of Washington, v. 449.
[2] Kapp's Kalb, 105.

d'Ayen will permit him to rejoin us. If the Marquis has not already made a bargain with the ship's owner, his blunders will cost him dear. I call them blunders because his course was silly from the moment he could not make up his mind quietly to execute his project, undisturbed by threats. It was the letter of the Vicomte de Coigny, received by the courier sent to him, on his return to Bordeaux, which produced this sudden change of purpose. If that letter had not found him already in the boat which was to carry us aboard our vessel, I believe La Fayette would have returned at once, and in my opinion he would have acted properly. When he asked my advice about what he should do, I thought it my duty to dissuade him from disregarding the wishes of his father-in-law and the commands of the King. On the contrary, I advised him to give way to his family and to avoid a rupture with them. Had he not constantly flattered himself that he had the approval of the Duc d'Ayen, I should always have warned him not to go so far as he went. He always assured me that his family sanctioned his plans, that his father-in-law himself intended at some time to go to America with the Vicomte de Noailles, and that even Madame de La Fayette had been made acquainted with his intentions by her parents and would approve of them. I have always thought him to blame for keeping the matter secret from his wife until the moment of his departure. If he had told me in Paris what he has admitted since, I should have remonstrated most earnestly against the whole scheme. As it is, the affair will cost him some money. But if it be said that he has done a foolish thing, it may be answered that he acted from the most honorable motives and that he can hold up his head before all high-minded men." And on the same day he wrote, "The reasons which drove us to enter this port still detain us here, for we must have the permission of the Marquis, or of the owner of the vessel, before proceeding on our voyage. By a letter of

Messrs. Raimbaux & C^ie^ I learn that he reached Bordeaux on the 3d and immediately sent a courier to Paris, whose return he is awaiting. This shows that he is reluctant to abandon his project and his vessel, and still hopes to obtain the consent of his family and of M. de Maurepas. I hardly think he will succeed. It will not be before the 11th that I shall know what to expect, even if La Fayette should receive an immediate answer from Paris. This long delay is intolerable. I shall be too late for the opening of the campaign, and am so much the more mortified as Mr. Deane offered me a passage on one of his ships. If the matter be still long protracted, I shall either return to Paris, or betake myself to the Isle of Ré or to Nantes, to wait for news from Mr. Deane."

On the 12th of April he wrote, "At this moment the post brings me a letter from the Marquis dated the 5th, at Bordeaux. He says he was refused permission to proceed, and that he fears being compelled to go to Toulon. He is now waiting for the return of his courier sent to Paris, and will inform me at once of the answer he receives." And again, on the 15th of April, "The Marquis writes from Bordeaux, under date of the 12th instant, that he was on the point of leaving for Marseilles, where the royal order requires him to report himself to-day. He says that the Court devotes great attention to this affair of his, but he still hopes to gain over the Duc d'Ayen, so as to be at liberty to rejoin me. He therefore requests me not to sail before receiving another letter from him from Toulon or some other point. If I am to wait until he gets to Marseilles, I shall have to stay here until the 26th. La Fayette's letter shows that the ship is still held in his name. He requests me to have an eye to his interests and to see that his investment is realized as soon as possible."

At that very moment La Fayette had left Bordeaux on his way back to the ship, and had made the final effort which led to his escape from further obstacles and to his

actual departure for America. He was joined in Bordeaux by a young French officer, a friend of his, the Vicomte de Mauroy, who had also obtained an appointment from Mr. Deane; and in company with him he started in a post-chaise to return to Los Pasajes, having written to M. de Maurepas that, as the Government had not absolutely refused to remove its interdict, he should accept its silence as consent,—a "plaisanterie" to which he referred in after-years with a smile. He had told the commandant at Bordeaux that he should go to Marseilles, in compliance with the King's order; but as soon as he and his companion had got safely outside the town they changed their course and turned their faces toward San Sebastian. Whilst the Vicomte de Mauroy sat in the chaise, La Fayette disguised himself in the costume of a post-boy and went ahead on horseback.

Everything prospered with them on their journey until they came to St.-Jean-de-Luz, where the daughter of the innkeeper at whose house they stopped recognized in the pretended post-boy the gentleman whom she had seen, only a few days before, travelling toward Bordeaux; and a sudden exclamation of surprise from her, which was only half suppressed at a sign from La Fayette, came very near exposing him. Some officials who had been following him came up soon after, but, the girl having sent them in the wrong direction, La Fayette and M. de Mauroy were enabled to continue their journey to Los Pasajes, where they arrived safely on the 17th of April. Kalb's last letter from there to his wife was dated on the 17th, and told her,—

"At this moment the Marquis has arrived, and he is prepared to set out with us in a day or two. He came to this conclusion by receiving assurances from every one in Paris that none other than the Duc d'Ayen had procured the royal order, and that all the world is in favor of La Fayette's enterprise and greatly dissatisfied with his father-

in-law for having obstructed his course, and that finally the ministers, on being asked their real sentiments in the matter, answered that they would have said nothing at all but for the complaints of the Duc d'Ayen. We have therefore resolved to steer for our destined port, if no unforeseen obstacle intervenes. This is the last letter I shall write you, if not from Europe, at least from this harbor."

The French Government took no further steps to delay longer a project which circumstances had obliged it to notice officially, but to which the ministers themselves felt no very bitter hostility; serious questions of state in regard to their policy toward Great Britain coming up at this time drove the incident from their minds, and the visit which the Emperor Joseph II. of Austria made at that moment to Paris engrossed the Cabinet with matters of international concern. Everybody in Parisian society was talking of La Fayette's exploit with admiration and approval, and M. de Vergennes, the Secretary of Foreign Affairs, remarked that he had heard La Fayette had run off again, but that he should take good care this time not to mention it to the King.

The Marquis de La Fayette sailed from Los Pasajes for America in La Victoire, on Sunday, the 20th of April, 1777. He had with him, besides the Vicomte de Mauroy and Johann Kalb, the following officers: Colonel de Lesser, Colonel de Valfort, Lieutenant-Colonel de Fayolles, Lieutenant-Colonel de Franval, Major Dubuysson, Major de Gimat, Major Dubois-Martin, Captain de Vrigny, Captain de Bedaulx, Captain de la Colombe, Captain Capitaine, Lieutenant Candon, and an American named Price, who had been recommended by Mr. Deane, and who is described in the official permit as "Leonard Price, aged 22, native of Sauveterre."[1]

[1] Besides these, the certificate of La Fayette contains the names of Jean Simon Camus, Michel Moteau, François Aman Rogé, and Antoine Redon. Of these, however, Camus is the only one who signed the certificate.

Upon getting out to sea, La Fayette ordered his captain to sail directly for the United States, although their papers were taken out for the West Indies. The captain replied that he could not obey that order, because the ship's papers protected them only in going to the West Indies, and if they were caught by an English cruiser making for the United States they would instantly be made prisoners and their cargo seized; whereupon La Fayette repeated his order to sail for North America, threatening in case of disobedience to put the ship in charge of the second officer; but, observing an extraordinary unwillingness on the part of the captain, he talked further with him, and discovered that he had smuggled on board the vessel several thousand dollars' worth of goods which he intended to sell in the West Indies, and that this was the cause of his fear of being overtaken by an English man-of-war. The captain's peace of mind was restored, however, by a promise on the part of La Fayette to indemnify him in case of loss by capture, whereupon he agreed to steer as he was directed to do,[1] and La Fayette, who knew that La Victoire could not make any reasonable show of a fight, with her "two old cannon and a few muskets," having made up his mind to blow her up rather than to be taken by the British, settled himself down for his voyage.[2]

It was a long and a very tedious one. Fortunately, we have some account of it from his own pen; for, after he had been at sea somewhat over a month, he wrote to Mme. de La Fayette a letter dated on board La Victoire, the 30th of May, 1777:[3]

"It is from very far away that I am writing to you, dear heart, and to this cruel separation is added the still more dreadful uncertainty of the time when I shall hear from you again. I hope, however, that it is not very distant, for, of all the many causes that

[1] Sparks, Writings of Washington, v. 450.
[2] Mémoires de ma Main, i. 15.
[3] La Fayette, Correspondance, i. 84.

make me long to get ashore again, there is nothing that increases my impatience like this. How many fears and anxieties I have had in addition to the pain of leaving behind me all that is most dear! How did you take my second departure? Did you love me the less? Have you forgiven me? Have you thought that, at all events, we should have been separated, I in Italy dragging along a life with no chance to distinguish myself, surrounded by people who are most hostile to my projects and my views? But, after all, this reflection could not prevent me from feeling terribly at the awful moment when we were losing sight of land. Your grief, that of my friends, Henriette,[1]—it all came before my mind with frightful vividness, and for an instant I felt that I had nothing to say in defence of what I was about to do. If you knew what I have suffered, what weary days I have passed thus flying from everything that I love best in the world! Must I yet learn, besides all this, that you refuse to forgive me? Indeed, my dear heart, in that event I should be pitiable beyond expression.

"But I am telling you nothing about myself and my health, and I am sure these things are of interest to you. I have been, ever since my last letter to you, in the most dismal of countries; the sea is so wearisome, and I believe we have the same doleful influence upon each other, it and I. I ought to have landed before this, but the winds have cruelly opposed me. I shall not see Charlestown for eight or ten days longer. That is where I expect to land, and it will be a great pleasure for me. Once I am there, I shall have every hope of getting news from France; I shall then learn so many interesting details, not only of what I am going to find before me, but above all about what I have left behind with such great regret. Provided I find that you are well and that you still love me, and that a certain number of our friends are in the same condition, I shall take philosophically everything else, whatever it may be, or from whatever direction it may come. Though, if my heart were wounded in its tenderest spot, if you did not love me as before, I should be indeed too miserable. But I need not fear that, need I, my dear heart? I was very ill during the first part of the voyage, and I had the consolation vouchsafed to the wicked, that of suffering in company with many others. I treated myself in my usual way, and I recovered sooner than the rest; now I am about as well as if I

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[1] His first child, born December 15, 1775, who died in 1777, during his absence in America.

were on land; I feel sure that, once I am ashore, I shall have perfect health for a long time to come. Do not allow yourself to feel anxious that I am running great danger in the occupation that is before me. The post of major-general has always been a warrant of long life. It is so different from the service I should have had in France, as colonel, for instance. With my present rank I shall only have to attend councils of war. Ask any of the French generals, of whom there are so many, because, once having attained that rank, they run no further risk and they do not make way for others as they would do in lower grades of the service. In order to show you that I am not trying to deceive you, I will admit that we are in danger at this moment, because we are likely at any time to be attacked by an English vessel and we are not strong enough to defend ourselves. But as soon as I land I shall be in perfect safety. You see that I tell you everything in order that you may feel at ease and not allow yourself to be anxious without cause.

"I shall not write you the journal of my voyage, because here one day follows another, and, what is worse, they are all alike. Nothing but sky and nothing but water; and to-morrow it will be just the same. . . . But now let me talk of more important things, of you, of our dear Henriette, of her brother or her sister,—whichever it may be,—Henriette is so lovable herself that she makes me wish for a girl; but, whatever our new child may be, I shall welcome it with very sincere happiness. Do not lose a moment in sending me the joyful news of its birth. Mr. Deane and my friend Carmichael will aid you in this, and I am sure they would neglect no opportunity to make me happy as quickly as possible. Write, or send me a reliable man, like Landin, for example; for it would be such a pleasure to talk with any one who had seen you. However, do in this matter as you think best.[1]

"7th June.—I am still out upon this dreary plain, which is beyond all comparison the most dismal place that one can be in. I try to console myself a little by thinking of you and of our friends at home, and I picture to myself the joy of meeting you again. What a delightful moment that will be when I come home, when I rush in unexpectedly to take you into my arms,—and perhaps I shall find you with your children. I have an exquisite pleasure

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[1] La Fayette's second daughter, Anastasie, was born in July, 1777. She was married, in 1798, to the Comte Charles de Latour-Maubourg. She died in 1863.

in thinking of that time. Do not think that it is very distant; it will seem long enough to me, no doubt, but in point of fact it will not be as long as you imagine. Without being able to foretell the day or the month, without being able to predict the course of events, I know that the exile until next January, prescribed for me by the Duc d'Ayen, seemed so interminable that I am not going now wilfully to inflict upon myself a long separation.

"But consider the difference between my occupation and my present life and what they would have been if I had gone upon that useless journey. As the defender of that liberty which I adore, free myself beyond all others, coming as a friend to offer my services to this most interesting republic, I bring with me nothing but my own free heart and my own good will, no ambition to fulfil and no selfish interest to serve; if I am striving for my own glory, I am at the same time laboring for its welfare. I trust that for my sake you will become a good American; it is a sentiment made for virtuous hearts. The happiness of America is intimately connected with the happiness of all mankind; she is destined to become the safe and venerable asylum of virtue, of honesty, of tolerance, of equality, and of peaceful liberty.

"We have had small alarms from time to time, but, with a little care and with reasonably good fortune, I hope to get through without serious accident, and I shall be all the more pleased because I am learning every day to be extremely prudent. You remember the Vicomte used to say that 'travelling develops the youthful mind,' and if he never repeated it more than once every morning and once at night, I should not think that too often, for I am coming more and more to understand the truth of that assertion. I have no idea where he is now, the poor Vicomte, nor the Prince, nor, indeed, any of my friends, and I am suffering cruelly from this lack of news. Whenever you have a good opportunity to talk with any of those I love, give them a thousand, ten thousand kind greetings from me.

"We have begun to-day to see certain kinds of birds which indicate that the land is near. The hope of arriving there is sweet, for my life in this region is very dull. Fortunately I am well enough now to occupy myself a little, and I spend my time between my military books and my study of English. I am making progress with that language, which will soon become so necessary to me.

"Adieu. Night coming on obliges me to stop, for I have lately forbidden the use of lights about the ship; see how careful I am!

Good-by, then; but with my fingers directed a little by the impulses of my heart, I have no need of lights to tell you that I love you and shall love you all my life."

In the mean time the American Commissioners in France prepared for La Fayette's reception in the United States by the following letter addressed to Congress:[1]

"The Marquis de La Fayette, a young nobleman of great family connexions here and great wealth, is gone to America in a ship of his own, accompanied by some officers of distinction, in order to serve in our armies. He is exceedingly beloved, and everybody's good wishes attend him; we cannot but hope he may meet with such a reception as will make the country and his expedition agreeable to him. Those who censure it as imprudent in him do nevertheless applaud his spirit, and we are satisfied that the civilities and respect that may be shown him will be serviceable to our affairs here, as pleasing not only to his powerful relations, and to the Court, but to the whole French nation. He has left a beautiful young wife big with child, and for her sake particularly we hope that his bravery and ardent desire to distinguish himself will be a little restrained by the General's prudence, so as not to permit his being hazarded much, but on some important occasion.

"B. FRANKLIN. SILAS DEANE.

"PARIS, 25 May, 1777."

Thus came La Fayette to America. Slowly he made his way across the sea, his heart always turning back to his beloved France, whilst his generous sympathy for a struggling nation gave him courage to face the dangers that surrounded him, and filled his mind with noble thoughts of self-sacrifice, of patience, of heroism, in the cause of that liberty which, as he said, he adored.

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[1] Diplomatic Correspondence, Wharton, ii. 324.

CHAPTER II.

THE HOSTILE SENTIMENT IN FRANCE TOWARD GREAT BRITAIN.

At the time of La Fayette's departure for America, France was upon the very verge of war with England, although as yet this was a carefully guarded state secret, and we have no reason to believe that La Fayette had knowledge of it. The outbreak of the American Revolution was the occasion of this almost hostile attitude of the two countries; but the causes of it are to be sought in the events of many years before. They lay in the deep-seated resentment which had taken hold of the French mind as the result of former humiliation and former defeat, from which the nation had not recovered either in its material resources or in its national pride,—injuries which every French statesman believed must be avenged before France could ever again be truly great. England was to them the source of the evil which had befallen their country since the middle of the century. It had made war upon her, it had taken her provinces away from her, it had defeated her armies, and by its superiority at sea it threatened her commerce. It was the "hereditary enemy," whose movements were always to be watched with suspicion, lest success might strengthen its haughty spirit and its insatiable thirst for power should lead to further aggression upon nations not sufficiently strong to resist its ever-increasing force. Men in France believed that peace must be maintained with this enemy as the only hope of present safety, but that peace would last only until the opportunity should occur when the country

might safely go to war. Whether the uprising in the Colonies of North America was about to present this opportunity, was a question to which the ministers and diplomatists of France had given, for several years, the closest attention. They followed the course of events with intense satisfaction as the Revolution progressed through the Colonies until it called for serious efforts from the mother-country to control it; they hailed with delight the news that the Colonists were stubbornly contending for their rights, and that England could no longer command obedience, but was, on the contrary, likely to lose her sovereignty over America altogether.

Whilst the enemy was thus distracted by party dissension at home and weakened by the demands of a war which obliged it to send its navy and its troops to the other side of the world, the day might come when France should strike a blow that would crush her rival, humbled then by the breaking up of its own empire and the loss of its richest possessions. This was the dream of French statesmen; and in it they saw the glory of France restored, the prestige of her military power renewed, the strength of her navy increased to command respect for her flag upon the seas, and her position in the councils of Europe equal once more to that which had been won for her by the great King Louis in the century before. Nobody in France believed that the Seven Years' War was definitively closed. The Treaty of Paris had brought peace, it is true, and its provisions had then been fulfilled for many years, with the renewal of what were made to appear like the most cordial diplomatic relations with Great Britain, based upon assurances of mutual confidence and respect. But to all Frenchmen the Treaty of Paris was not a peace; it was a cessation of hostilities. Its obligations, honestly assumed, meant to their minds effacement, national destruction and disgrace; and no man who loved his country could consent to accept the terms of an

agreement forced upon her by the disasters at Rossbach and at Minden.

How true this is may be seen from a state paper addressed to King Louis XVI. by his Minister of Foreign Affairs and still preserved in the Archives of France,[1] in which the situation is described with such clearness that no one can doubt the sentiment of the time:

"The humiliating peace of 1763 was bought at the price of our possessions, of our commerce, and of our credit in the Indies; at the price of Canada, Louisiana, Isle Royale, Acadia, and Senegal. It established the opinion among all nations that there was left in France neither power nor resource; the envy which up to that time had been the moving influence in the politics of all other Courts in their relations to France now degenerated into a sort of contempt; the Cabinet of Versailles had neither credit nor influence with any Court; instead of being, as she had formerly been, the centre of every great undertaking, she had now become merely a silent looker-on; nobody consulted her; no one even counted as of any value her approval or her dissent. In a word, France, the greatest Power in Europe, had become absolutely inactive; she had lost credit with her allies, and she had no consideration from other Powers. Such was our sad and humiliating position at the time when Your Majesty succeeded to the throne. . . . We need but to read the Treaty of Paris, and especially the negotiations which preceded it, to comprehend the ascendency assumed by England over France, and to observe how greatly that arrogant nation enjoyed the pleasure of having humiliated us. . . . I do not hesitate, Sire, to declare that a people may meet with reverses and may be forced to submit to the imperious law of necessity and of self-preservation; but when these reverses and this humiliation are unjust, when their end and aim are to increase the pride of an arrogant rival, such a people owes it to itself, to its honor, its dignity, and its position before men, to free itself as soon as it is able. If it neglects this and allows fear to turn it from its duty, it but adds degradation to disgrace, and makes itself an object of contempt in its own day and in time to come."

Curiously enough, it was not a combination of European

[1] Affaires étrangères, Mémoires et Documents, t. 410, No. 11: Doniol, La Participation de la France à l'Etablissement des Etats-Unis d'Amérique, i. 2.

politics, the intrigues of a European Court, or the ambition of a European monarch that was expected now to furnish the opportunity which France sought of avenging herself, but the remote Colonies of North America, whose existence beyond the Atlantic Ocean was otherwise scarcely ever mentioned or thought of. The uneasiness excited by the passage of the Stamp Act, coming almost immediately after the close of the Seven Years' War, arrested the attention of the Duc de Choiseul, Prime Minister of Louis XV., a sagacious observer and an ardent politician, long versed in affairs of state, ambitious beyond aught else for the greatness of France, the exigencies of whose career had obliged him to sign the much-hated Treaty of 1763, and who is said to have consoled himself in that moment of humiliation with the thought that it was a treaty which would soon be broken. He detected, with unerring judgment, a weak spot in the British Empire which he was convinced would develop and extend and would some day be the source of serious trouble to the English Government. He went further than that: he declared that he saw influences then at work which were destined to reach throughout the Colonies, to incite them against the restraints of the ministerial Government, and ultimately to wrest them from the grasp of the mother-country; and he announced this opinion to the King as early as the year 1765,—a remarkable case of political foresight in a distant observer, who saw in a small cloud upon the horizon a forerunner of the storm that was to come. It was all the more remarkable because nobody in England dreamed of the danger at that time, nor, indeed, had men's minds been brought to consider it in the Colonies themselves, where a separation from the mother-country was still contemplated "with the utmost horror"[1] almost ten years after the Duc de Choiseul had predicted

[1] Marshall, Life of Washington, ii. 397.

the Revolution and had devised a plan to be followed by the Government of France at the moment when they should declare their independence.

It was in this connection that, as we have seen, M. de Choiseul sent the Baron de Kalb to America in 1768. The times, however, were not yet ripe for action. Kalb's mission accomplished nothing. The day of M. de Choiseul's power at Court came to an end, and his plans were laid aside, to be forgotten for the moment, though they were subsequently to be recalled to mind. The agitation in the Colonies had not as yet sufficiently united the American people in one common interest capable of holding them together in solid resistance, on the one hand; while, on the other, France was too weak to go to war again at once, and England was too strong to give any one reason to believe that she could be successfully attacked.

King Louis XV. died in 1774. With a new reign came a new Cabinet and a new administration, to whom were bequeathed the country in a condition of despondency which, it was afterward said, could hardly be conceived, and the task of re-establishing the dignity of the nation, of strengthening its army, of building up its navy, and, whenever it was possible, of damaging England.

The new King, whose misfortunes and sad ending must always enlist for him the sympathy of mankind, was young, without experience in governing, and timid in the management of affairs of state. The burden of the realm rested with exceeding heaviness upon his shoulders when he was suddenly called, by the death of his grandfather, to consider subjects and to decide questions which he did not comprehend. His necessities obliged him to form his decisions largely upon the opinions of other men whom he called about him. No doubt Louis was upright and conscientious; he inherited an absolute authority based upon a volcano then almost ready to burst out and destroy it

and him, but he loved France and earnestly longed for her glory, he desired to feel a fatherly affection for his people, whom he did not in the least understand, and his constant wish was to do what was just, honorable, and right, so far as his lights permitted him to discern it. The peculiar sadness in the fate of Louis XVI. is that whilst, as a man, he was one of the best of the French kings, circumstances made him the representative of, and forced him to suffer for, the wrongs and abuses of all his predecessors. He was weak at a time when it is exceedingly doubtful if even the strongest of men could have withstood the fury of the storm that broke over him.

King Louis XVI. selected his Cabinet in July, 1774. He placed at the head of it the Comte de Maurepas, a man nearing the end of a life filled with reverses and disappointments, whose strength was too far spent for the struggle with questions of public business, and whose reputation for frivolity has made it difficult to decide how far he directed the policy of the Government in solving the serious problems that confronted it during the next few years. Nevertheless, M. de Maurepas had rendered good service to France in former days, especially in the reconstruction of the navy; he was devoted to the King, he was an enemy of Great Britain, and Louis kept him near his person, so that he might advise with him every day before taking any step. The famous Turgot was made Contrôleur-Général,—or Minister of Finance,—M. de Sartine became Secretary of the Navy, and M. de Saint-Germain Secretary of War. But the man who shaped the policy of France, who conceived and executed her diplomacy in the varied and delicate forms of her relations with the Courts of Europe, and who for several years in one sense controlled the Government, was the Secretary of State, or Minister of Foreign Affairs, Charles Gravier, Comte de Vergennes. His enormous correspondence, still preserved in the French Archives, which was

prepared by his own hand, scrupulously corrected, interlined, erased, or re-written,—letters to his agents, despatches to the Ambassadors, propositions submitted to the Cabinet, memorials to the King,—if taken together would give us almost by itself a history of France during the early years of Louis XVI.

The Comte de Vergennes, who was born in Burgundy, of a family still existing there, had been trained to the career of diplomacy during the ministry of the Duc de Choiseul in the preceding reign, and, having been fortunate enough to take advantage of some opportunities which came in his way, had distinguished himself abroad and given satisfaction at Court. He was sent as Ambassador to the Turkish Porte, and afterward to the Court of Sweden. King Louis recalled him from Stockholm to confide to him the portfolio of Foreign Affairs.

The talent of M. de Vergennes was that of an extremely patient, cautious, and painstaking administrator, rather than of a leader who achieved success by daring and enterprise or won admiration by the brilliancy of his conceptions. But he had one idea to which for him all else in the world was to be subordinated, and that was the glory of France. For this he incessantly thought and planned and labored: he studied the chart of Europe in search of alliances to help her, or of combinations that might protect her from injury; his most cherished hope was that something might happen to weaken her enemies. Upon entering the Cabinet, M. de Vergennes immediately defined his policy in a memorial to the King, which, reduced to its simplest expression, was, to strengthen France by a close alliance with Spain, and to keep a watchful eye upon the movements of England. By this means he hoped to make France respected in Europe. To be respected, he conceived, is to supplement the strength one already has by adding to it the moral influence of public opinion, which in itself is strength.

"The consideration and the influence," he declared, "of every Power are based upon, and measured by, the general opinion as to its intrinsic force. It is, therefore, to establish this opinion and to gain the greatest advantage from it that all our foresight should be exerted. Every nation is respected which is prepared to make a vigorous resistance. . . . Peace has lasted now for twelve years, which is a great prejudice to its continued stability. Therefore we shall not exceed the limit of reasonable foresight if we hold ourselves in readiness for whatever may come. Besides, the best way to assure the duration of peace is not to fear the advent of war. . . . We have close by us a restless and grasping people, more jealous of the prosperity of their neighbors than of their own welfare, powerfully armed, and ready to strike at a moment's warning. Let us not deceive ourselves, for, whatever parade the English ministers may make of their pacific intentions, we cannot safely rely upon them except so long as their domestic troubles continue. These may come to an end, or they may increase to such an extent as to drive the Government to quiet the discontent at home by directing attention to new enterprises abroad. Indeed, the example is not lacking of a case in which the cry of war against France has united parties in England. Let us suppose that we should find ourselves involved in a naval war, even contrary to the wishes of the Court of London as well as to our own; we have a treaty with Spain which makes common cause with her in all our wars, offensive or defensive. . . . The engagement is a burdensome one, no doubt; but, in spite of that, it is probably more advantageous to France than to Spain. The commerce which England maintains with Spain, in whose markets she finds an outlet for her manufactures and the source of great national wealth, makes her less anxious to seize upon territory which, after all, Spain merely cultivates for others; but, as she has, on the other hand, nothing to expect from France through legitimate trade, she looks with a jealous eye both upon the wonderful development of our plantations in America and upon our industrial prosperity in Europe. If there be anything that will impress her and keep her in check, it is the spectacle of France and Spain united, and the certainty that the first cannon fired by her against either will be replied to immediately by both." [1]

Here is the motive in French politics at the beginning of the reign of Louis XVI.,—to wit, the belief that the

[1] Archives of France, Mémoires et Documents, t. 584, No. 9; Doniol, La Participation de la France, i. 19, 20.

ascendency of England was a menace to France. Here is also the starting-point of the intervention of France in the American Revolution. If civil war was about to distract the British Government, and if England's strength was to be exhausted by internal difficulties which would disturb her at home and render her less formidable abroad, the opportunity of aiming a blow at her from the effects of which she could not recover her former advantage, and which would force her to deal with France at least upon equal terms, was likely to present itself; and the purpose of striking this blow was never lost sight of by the Comte de Vergennes.

It is true that events in the Colonies had hardly developed sufficiently in 1774 to foreshadow the definite result, even to the mind of the Secretary of State, who did not grasp the situation at once with the quick discernment of the Duc de Choiseul, and, although the conclusion was not reached until after a most complicated series of intrigues and a long course of dissimulation under which preparations for war were masked by a pretended desire for peace, yet its logical premises were stated by M. de Vergennes when he declared, in his memoir to the King, that a nation which could free itself from the arrogance of a successful rival, that is to say, revenge itself for former defeat, was bound to do so. This, of course, meant war; but the Comte de Vergennes never concealed the fact that, in his plan of government, the possibility of war must always be kept in view by France.

The first news of the outbreak in North America was not received by the Cabinet of Louis XVI. with the feeling that it was of very grave consequence; it came through English channels, and when it was reported by the French diplomatic representatives in London it bore the coloring of English opinion, so that M. de Vergennes had the impression that the revolt would soon be suppressed, and for the moment gave it no serious thought. Possibly he was

influenced by a despatch from M. de Guines, the French Ambassador in England, who wrote that Lord Rochford had told him the trouble arose from a lot of descendants of Cromwell who had settled in America and had begun a rebellion, which would, of course, very soon be put down.[1] He felt also that, at all events, England was not likely to carry the hostilities with her subjects to the extreme limit, and that she would sacrifice her prestige, in case her measures were not successful, and seek peace with them, rather than run the risk of losing the Colonies and of shaking the empire to its foundations.[2]

But early in the year 1775 the shipments of troops to the Colonies, and the extensive preparations for carrying on the war, attracted his attention to the seriousness of the conflict, and he immediately directed the Embassy in London to follow events as closely as possible and to report every step to him. He was suspicious at that time that the massing of British forces upon the North American continent might conceal some ulterior purpose which should threaten danger to the interests of France or her colonies in the West Indies, and he determined not to allow himself to be taken by surprise. From this time, M. de Vergennes followed the course of the American struggle with uninterrupted watchfulness, until it absorbed his attention and led him, three years later, to an open declaration of war.

His first step now, however, was toward the "Family Compact," the famous offensive and defensive alliance between the houses of Bourbon in France and in Spain, concluded in the preceding reign, which at this moment became the bulwark to which France might fly for safety and under the protection of which she might recover her strength and re-establish her integrity. If the Spanish ships could be united to those of France, they would

[1] Angleterre, t. 510, No. 112 : Doniol, La Participation de la France, i. 39.
[2] Angleterre, t. 508, No. 88 : Doniol, i. 42.

make an array formidable enough to oppose the great naval forces across the British Channel; and to attain this unity of strength was especially important, in the opinion of the Cabinet, because close observers of political events at that time agreed that the next war would be at sea. With France and Spain united and ready to operate together for their common interest, as described by M. de Vergennes, when the guns of both should answer immediately a shot fired at either, the uprising in the American Colonies might be made use of. He dreamed of a war upon England in which the two Bourbon monarchies should join; and, by starting with the trouble between the Colonies and the mother-country, which should be fomented in every possible manner, much injury might be inflicted upon the common enemy before it should become necessary to declare open hostilities.

To accomplish this result, he set before himself the task of bringing to his view the King and Cabinet of Spain, of inducing Carlos III. to look with increased solicitude upon the dangers which beset his nephew of France, and of persuading the Spanish Government that its position in Europe and its colonies in the West Indies made its interests identical with those of France, especially in view of the ever-suspected movements and intentions of Great Britain. The voluminous correspondence of the Secretary with his Ambassador at Madrid and with other persons at the Spanish Court, as well as with the Embassy at London, shows how conscientiously he devoted himself to the fulfilment of his duty.

The Marquis d'Ossun, French Ambassador at Madrid, was directed to call the attention of the Spanish Court to the large number of troops then being sent from England to America, and to insist that although this was ostensibly, and perhaps really, for the subjection of the Colonists, yet their presence on that side of the Atlantic Ocean was a source of great danger to the West Indies, because a

change might take place in the policy of England and it was impossible to tell what conquests she might undertake next. Her invariable system theretofore, said M. de Vergennes, had been based upon her hatred of Spain and France and upon a jealousy which impelled her to injure them whenever she could. Although at that moment her expressions were pacific, it was only because of the internal dissensions which occupied her, and because she feared that the two monarchies would unite, and, taking advantage of so good an opportunity, do her all the damage which, if she were able, she would do them.[1] No reliance could be placed upon any protestation from England as to the purpose for which these troops were to be employed, nor upon any promise to withdraw them as soon as they should have accomplished what they were sent there for; because that would only furnish a pretext, under the pretence of keeping them there to re-establish order, of holding them until it should become convenient to send them in another direction, that is to say, against the West Indies.

This reasoning won the approval of the Spanish Government. It convinced the King and his Prime Minister, the Marqués de Grimaldi, as well as the Spanish Ambassador at Paris, the Conde de Aranda, all of whom were now impressed with the impending danger; and it gave to M. de Vergennes a very considerable influence, as well as an immense advantage, in the purpose he had of uniting the forces of the two countries. It accomplished what he was most anxious for the moment to do, in convincing the Spanish Court that the two Governments were in danger of being attacked and might possibly be called upon to defend themselves. Strange as the idea appears in the light of subsequent events, there is every reason to believe that M. de Vergennes was sincere in his statement that he feared an attack from England upon the French

[1] Espagne, t. 576, No. 20 : Doniol, La Participation de la France, i. 51.

and Spanish colonies in the event of her having forces in North America which she could dispose of for that purpose; he repeated it frequently, and, although he was not sorry to use it as a means to his end in giving a certain dramatic effect to the union with Spain, yet it appears with such emphasis in his correspondence in other directions as to have the stamp of genuine feeling. It is important also because it undoubtedly influenced him in his connection with the United States.

The English Government assisted him unconsciously at that juncture by its conduct toward Spain. King Carlos III. already suspected that England had opposed him by comforting his enemy in a recent war he had had with Morocco; and he was engaged in a contest with Portugal then, which bordered upon war, about the boundary-lines of Paraguay and Buenos Ayres, in which the boldness of the Portuguese minister, M. de Pombal, was so extraordinary and so persistent that the King and his Cabinet were convinced that his attitude could have resulted only from British encouragement and the assurance of British aid. It happened in addition that the King of Spain was contemplating an attack upon the pirates of Algiers, who were preying upon his commerce and spreading terror throughout the Mediterranean; an expedition with which he hoped to distinguish his reign and to strengthen his influence in an appeal to the national pride of his subjects by performing a service which would be received with gratitude by the world. The preparations for this campaign were carried on with the greatest secrecy, but the watchful agents of the British ministry detected unusual activity in the Spanish ports and arsenals, which they reported immediately; whereupon England made a formal demand upon the Spanish Court to explain the purpose of these extraordinary measures. Not satisfied with the replies that were made, and without having given the Spaniards notice, the British Government sent a fleet

of four ships of the line and two frigates to the Bay of Biscay to watch the movements of Spanish ships. This proceeding was viewed by the King with great indignation. It was construed to mean that Great Britain was acting in concert with Portugal, and that this fleet was ready to defend Lisbon against possible attack, or was about to take part in an enterprise with the Portuguese against the Spanish possessions in South America. It confirmed the belief of Carlos III. that M. de Vergennes was right in his estimate of England, and it visibly increased the influence which that minister had at the Spanish Court.

Thus, by the middle of the year 1775 the Comte de Vergennes had progressed so far that he felt he could rely upon the support of Spain in any eventualities that were likely to occur. The tone of his correspondence with his Ambassadors shows this, especially that of his letters to the Comte de Guines at the Court of St. James. From this time forward the affairs of the American Colonies assumed greater importance in all his calculations, and he began to consider them with unremitting watchfulness,—his attitude toward England being always carefully sustained to express friendship and to inspire confidence in the good intentions of France. He wrote in one of his despatches to the Secretary of Legation in London, "Upon the departure of Lord Stormont this evening for England, whither he is going on leave, I recalled to him in the most positive manner the sincere and constant intention of the King to maintain peace, friendship, and neighborly relations with His British Majesty, and to contribute in every way to perpetuate the good understanding which now exists between the two countries. I assured the Ambassador that we have no possible desire to profit by their present embarrassment to give them additional cause of uneasiness."[1]

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[1] Angleterre, t. 509, No. 38: Doniol, La Participation de la France, i. 71.

Whether Lord Stormont was impressed by this assurance or not, we do not know, but it is unlikely that he allowed it greatly to influence his feelings; for throughout his very active subsequent career at the Court of Louis XVI., in which protestations of friendship were used almost daily to cover up the boldest intrigues, it must be admitted that he served his country well and never for an instant believed anything that was told him by an agent of the French Government.

So far as it was possible for the French Cabinet to bear good will toward any English ministry, the Government of Louis XVI. hoped for the continuance in office of Lord North; for they believed that during his administration the political troubles at home and the revolt in the Colonies would keep England from any exterior enterprise. They were in momentary fear that the Opposition would come into power under Lord Chatham, who would immediately make peace with the Colonies and then turn, with ungovernable hatred, upon France; in which event, as the chargé-d'affaires in London wrote, the troops in North America would be "like a naked sword in the hands of a madman." Up to this time it was half believed in France that the Opposition party in Parliament had stirred up the discontent in America merely as a pretext to overthrow the ministry; having succeeded in which, they would immediately make peace. But in the month of July, 1775, M. de Vergennes changed his mind as to that. He wrote to M. de Guines, "Unless I am mistaken about the situation of affairs in America, the English may now increase their forces as much as they choose, they will never again be able by arms to reduce that great continent to subjection; and I doubt if they will succeed better by negotiations, even if these are conducted by agents most acceptable to the Americans. Those people have been forced into a position from which they will not voluntarily retire; they have discovered their power, and they see how help-

less the mother-country is to control them; the bond of their union has been formed. The Americans may hereafter be the allies of England; but I doubt very much whether they will ever acknowledge themselves her subjects." [1] Yet he was unable to free his mind entirely from the constant fear that beset him lest some act on the part of England should bode ill to his country, remembering always "with horror," as he said, the sudden attack which crippled France in 1755; and he besought the Ambassador in England to penetrate the secrets of the Court, to get private information from the Opposition in Parliament, to display all possible zeal in every direction, in order to guard against "another similar act of perfidy." "For, while I am far from suspecting the English ministry of evil intentions," said he, "and while this would be a most unfavorable moment to disturb a peace which is necessary to them, yet our past experience should make us wary, for we do not want to be duped a second time." [2]

Thus, about a year before our Declaration of Independence, the Cabinet of France began seriously to consider the likelihood that the uprising of the American Colonies would be the occasion of a war between the two Crowns and Great Britain; and thenceforth it carried on continuously the measures which were declared both at Madrid and at Versailles to be "for the preservation of peace," yet were, none the less for this mask behind which they might be rendered less suspicious, actually preparations for an attack upon England. In order to have a fixed understanding with the Spanish Court upon this point, M. de Vergennes sought an early opportunity to bring the subject directly before King Carlos III. himself, and to obtain an expression from him as to his own feeling and the policy which Spain might be relied upon to adopt. The occasion offered itself when Louis XVI. wrote a

[1] Angleterre, t. 511, No. 21: Doniol, La Participation de la France, i. 89.
[2] Doniol, La Participation de la France, i. 91.

formal letter to his uncle, on the 7th of August, 1775, to announce the recent birth to the Comte d'Artois of a son, in which, by a clever arrangement upon the part of the Secretary of State, was introduced a reference to the matter uppermost in the latter's mind. King Louis was made to say, "I take advantage of this occasion to present to Your Majesty some reflections upon the present state of affairs. I know the aversion which Your Majesty has to war, and I agree sincerely with you in this sentiment. Possibly there never was a time when a war with England seemed less probable. There is not the least cause of dispute between us; yet the unfortunate policy of that nation makes it impossible for us to count upon anything in regard to it. England is very much engaged with her Colonies in America, and although I greatly doubt if these will ever again submit to the mother-country, yet some turn of politics might be used to persuade the English people that the remedy for its present ills lies in a war with us. I think, therefore, that we ought to direct our attention to the preparations which may be necessary, and to unite in taking such precautions as may be most effective in preventing war. . . . Our enemies will respect our power more, the more they see us united and ready to act in concert. Nevertheless, I believe that we ought not now to neglect our precautions. I have therefore given orders to M. de Vergennes to discuss with the Marqués de Grimaldi what it will be best for us to do. I trust Your Majesty will approve of my reflections."[1]

The Spanish expedition against Algiers had failed, and Admiral O'Reilly, after having concentrated his attack upon the Algerine fortress, much more easily defended than taken, had returned without having accomplished the purpose of the King, with a diminution of prestige most unacceptable at that moment to the French Court, who

[1] Archives Nationales, année 1775, No. 21: Doniol, La Participation de la France, i. 131.

were indirectly concerned, and to the disappointment and chagrin of the Spanish Government. Nevertheless, M. de Vergennes faced this temporary reverse with all the hopefulness of spirit that he possessed; and, while he openly expressed his regret at what had happened, he consoled himself with the reflection that, after all, no great harm had been done; the fleet had come back uninjured, and, although Spain had not met with the success that all her friends wished for, the expedition had been a formidable one, had demonstrated the naval strength of the kingdom, and by this armament had shown the King's enemies what he was able to contribute to a war at sea. In this tone he continued his friendly relations with the Court at Madrid, where it was acceptable, of course, not only to the Cabinet but to the King.

A few weeks later, he was rewarded by a reply from Carlos III. to the letter of his nephew upon the birth of a Bourbon prince, in which, after expressing the joy he felt at so happy an event, the King turned directly to the subject of concerted action by the two Crowns. "Nothing could be wiser than the reflections of Your Majesty upon our attitude toward a certain ambitious Power, which has no other views upon the subject of peace and war than those presented by the attainment of its own purposes or its own private interests. Since we do not wish to pursue a course so reprehensible and so unjust, which accords neither with the maxims of Your Majesty nor with mine, the only road open to us to protect ourselves and to defend our subjects, toward which we are directed both by religion and honor, is to act together in order that we may be in a position to repel force by force. For I am convinced that if the English were to see that we are prepared at every point they would let us alone, and we should still enjoy that peace which we are anxious to preserve; but the chief point is, to place ourselves in a position to impress this upon our enemies. . . . As the ques-

tion of greatest importance for us in relation to England is that of the navy, I think we should give the greatest attention at present to that, for we shall need time to renew it and to increase it. Upon this subject, and upon such other measures as it may be necessary to take, we shall consult through the channel of our ministers and ambassadors, and Your Majesty may rely upon my punctuality in carrying out all my engagements." [1]

The plans of M. de Vergennes had succeeded thus far quite to the limit of his hopes. He had drawn the bonds of the alliance more closely together, by taking advantage of recent events he had strengthened France with the assurance of support from Spain, and he had interested Spain in the plans he had in view by making clever representations of the danger which threatened the two Crowns and the identity of the interests of both in view of the attitude of Great Britain. He never allowed this idea to be lost sight of in his communications with Madrid, and he grew bolder with the increased feeling of security that he felt from his present situation, in his suggestions as to united action against England, seeking the opportunity to introduce a proposition that the war in America might offer a basis for the combined operations of France and Spain. In a despatch on the 28th of July, 1775, to his Ambassador at Madrid, the Marquis d'Ossun, whom he requested to regard as confidential all the communications he was about to make, though he knew from the character of the latter and from his extremely intimate relations at the Spanish Court that what he was about to say would reach the ears of those for whom it was intended, he took occasion to declare, "The English have inconsiderately embarked in a war with their Colonists in America which up to this time has cost them very dear, and is likely in its results to cost them a part of their

[1] Archives Nationales, K 164, No. 3, année 1775, No. 23 : Doniol, La Participation de la France, i. 140.

commercial existence. Their weakness which will follow as a necessary consequence will afford an opportunity to the two Crowns, and possibly without even striking a blow, to regain that superiority of consideration and influence which is always the reward of a wise and well-directed administration." [1]

This was the thin end of the wedge. Almost at the same moment he took pains to have sent to the Spanish King a copy of a letter written from London by M. de Guines, who reported that he had had a long and intimate conversation, the day before he wrote, with Lord Rochford, and that the latter gentleman had told him that there was a growing sentiment among the followers of both political parties in England that the only way to stop the war in America was to declare war upon France; that those who favored this idea were not alarmed by the alliance with Spain, because they remembered that England had fought both France and Spain at the end of the Seven Years' War, and they asserted that she could do it again, especially after the reverses the Spaniards had met with in the expedition to Algiers, which had had a very damaging effect upon their influence at the English Court; also that the idea of a disastrous war waged upon England which should result in re-establishing the French in Canada with their distasteful government and religion would be the strongest possible incentive to the Americans, who, if they were called upon thus to choose between England and France, would certainly cling to the mother-country, even at the sacrifice of their independence, because under any circumstances they would rather have the English than the French.

This last assertion touched M. de Vergennes upon a tender spot; it wounded his national pride, whilst it increased his bitterness toward England and filled him with

[1] Espagne, t. 576, No. 173 : Doniol, La Participation de la France, i. 115.

alarm for the success of his favorite plan. It had the immediate effect of drawing him nearer to the position of the American Colonies. Taking advantage of the feelings which he knew would be aroused in Spain by this half-concealed threat of Lord Rochford, he went a step further than he had gone as yet, and suggested to the Spanish Court a possible support of the American Colonies and a friendly understanding with them in their struggle. This was the first direct intimation in his diplomatic correspondence of his purpose to intervene on behalf of the American people; it appears in his despatch of the 7th of August, 1775, to the Marquis d'Ossun, who was instructed to consult with the Spanish ministry upon the subject and to take measures to bring it to the notice of the King:

"We believe here that upon the first open act of hostility committed by England we should no longer feel called upon to use moderation, but that we should instantly seize upon all English ships within our power both in our ports and upon the high seas. This would deprive England of a certain number of sailors, which of all losses is the most damaging to her. We believe, however, that it would be well in this connection to except all such vessels as may be the property of, or be chartered by, the inhabitants of North America; for it would not be a good policy to throw upon these people the burden of a war of which, after all, they would be merely the innocent cause, or, by inflicting upon them unnecessary hardships, to drive them back and make them willing to bear again a yoke which they are now endeavoring to throw off. It might even be proper for us to issue a joint declaration which should be addressed to them as a free and independent people, inviting them to make use of our respective ports and assuring to them therein the freedom and the privileges of commerce." [1]

Having gone thus far concerning affairs in America, M. de Vergennes began to feel that he lacked reliable information as to what was taking place in the Colonies, and

[1] Espagne, t. 577, No. 15: Doniol, La Participation de la France, i. 126.

that, in fact, he knew little or nothing about the Americans themselves, what manner of people they were, or what they were capable of. His sources of knowledge were almost entirely in England, and he began to discern that what came from there was not correct; for it now became evident that both the Government and the people of Great Britain had been mistaken as to the gravity of the contest and the facility with which it could be decided. Men began to feel that neither Lord Chatham nor any one else could bring the Colonies back to their position of dependence. He decided to send an agent to America able to form an estimate of the country and its resources, of the people, of their character and their military strength; who should take every opportunity of a vessel returning to France to make a detailed report of what he saw, in order that the ministry might judge of the situation as affairs developed, and directly from sources of their own.

A person of this description was found in London by the Ambassador, M. de Guines, who described him as "a French gentleman, who had been attached to the regiment 'du Cap,' had been in all the English Colonies, and, in fact, had just returned from there; he was very willing to go out again, and, besides the interest he expressed in undertaking a mission of this character, he had acquaintances in Boston, New York, Providence, and Philadelphia, through whom doubtless he would be enabled to obtain such information as was required." His name was Achard Bonvouloir; he was first-cousin to the Marquis de Lambert. The Ambassador undertook to arrange with him for his adventure in such a way that under any circumstances M. Bonvouloir should not be able to compromise any one but himself; he should have nothing to show by which, in case of his capture or detection, the French Government could be brought into connection with his undertaking; and this had been agreed to by Bonvouloir at the outset. The price of his services was: 1st, That

he should receive a lieutenant's commission in the King's army, in order that he might be entitled to proper consideration in America, and, if it became necessary in the course of his investigations, that he might the more readily enlist in the army of the "rebels." This commission was to be antedated, because when he had been in America formerly he had given himself out as a French officer, which was not exactly true, although he had been attached as a volunteer to the regiment "du Cap," then stationed in the West Indies. 2d, Two hundred louis a year, out of which he should pay all his expenses. 3d, A letter from the King in which his Majesty should express his appreciation of M. Bonvouloir's zeal in the interests of France, and should recognize his services to the country: this, however, was not to be given to him, but was to be read to him and retained by the Ambassador.

These conditions were "placed under the eyes of the King" by M. de Vergennes, who announced to the Ambassador that his Majesty approved of them, as well as of the enterprise, and directed M. Bonvouloir to set out immediately for America, especial regard being had, however, to the fulfilment of that part of the contract which made it impossible for Bonvouloir to involve the Government, and it being understood that he should not look for protection if he fell into the hands of the British. The lieutenant's commission was issued from the War Department by command of the King, and the two hundred louis were paid to him by the Ambassador out of moneys allowed for extraordinary expenditures. His letters were to be addressed to Antwerp and sent under double envelope to a correspondent in Calais, who should not forward them to Antwerp, however, but should deliver them to the French Ambassador at London. Their substance was to relate exclusively to commercial matters, so devised under a form of cipher that, while they should convey the intelligence desired by the Government, they should not

excite suspicion if they came into the hands of those for whom they were not intended.

Thus equipped, M. Bonvouloir left London on the 8th of September, 1775, which fact the Ambassador reported to M. de Vergennes the same day: "M. de Bonvouloir is sent off. He goes aboard a vessel this evening which will sail during the night for Philadelphia: I have forbidden him even to pronounce the word Frenchman or to enter into any discussion as to our disposition toward the Americans. His mission is confined to the duty of giving us such information as may be interesting to us; he is quite able to accomplish this, but if he fails we shall only have risked two hundred louis in a matter which may become very important."[1]

The most important part of the mission of Bonvouloir, because it helps materially to determine the attitude of France toward the end of the year 1775, and shows the already fixed determination of the minister to approach the American Colonies in their contest with England, is the special instruction sent to him through the Ambassador in London by M. de Vergennes: "You will please reduce his instructions, which are only to be verbal, to two points which appear to me to be the most essential: the one is, to render you a faithful account of events and the general feeling in America; the other, to reassure the Americans against the fright which it has been sought to stir up among them in regard to us. Canada is the sensitive point with them: let him give them to understand that we have no thought of that whatever, but that, far from envying the liberty and independence which they are striving to secure, we admire the grandeur and the nobleness of their efforts, that we have no interest in putting obstacles in their way, but, on the contrary, we should be glad if favorable circumstances enabled them to make use

[1] Doniol, La Participation de la France, i. 138.

of our ports; the facilities for their commerce which they would find there would quickly prove the esteem we have for them."[1]

This is a perfectly clear statement of the intention on the part of the Secretary of State to encourage the "insurgents," and it is probably what he actually meant; but through the maze of diplomatic intrigue which surrounded the incidents of the time and involved his correspondence in apparently irreconcilable inconsistencies, it is difficult to determine what was true and what was not: so that if the armed intervention of France had never taken place, there would be present to the hand of the historian an abundance of documents by which it might be made to appear that that monarchy never had any intention of participating in the American Revolution.

Almost at the very moment when M. de Vergennes was preparing these instructions for Bonvouloir to take to America, he wrote with his own hand to the Ambassador in London, in reply to a report from that personage, that he had done well in his interview with Lord Suffolk to insist upon the friendly intentions of France toward England, and to disabuse his lordship's mind of any fear which he might have conceived that the French Government would think of giving aid to the American Colonies. "For that matter," he wrote, "the Colonies may say what they like, the principles of the King are immutable, and you will not go too far in declaring that, even if His Majesty's interest lay in feeding the flame of rebellion in America, his feeling of justice would forbid him to do so; and justice is the strongest impulse of his nature."[2]

Thus deliberately was the policy of the French minister planned and carried out, and as deliberately was it disavowed whenever a question arose as to his friendship

[1] The Comte de Vergennes to M. de Guines, 7th August, 1775: Doniol, La Participation de la France, i. 156.

[2] Angleterre, t. 511, No. 110: Doniol, La Participation de la France, i. 149.

toward England, with a perfect consistency of falsehood and a continued duplicity which are explicable on no other ground than that of the undoubted fear of England which existed in the mind of M. de Vergennes, and his perhaps inherited belief that the English, as a nation, were to be injured whenever an occasion offered, lest they might otherwise have time to injure their neighbors, and that, as individuals, their jealousy and love of conquest made it unsafe ever to tell them the truth. All the associations of his life were connected with hatred of England; to him, she was always "the enemy;" and he treated her as an enemy in peace as well as in war.

He did not always succeed in deceiving her, however, for his attitude and his sentiments were perfectly understood by Lord Stormont, the English Ambassador, who followed closely upon his footsteps as he advanced toward the American Colonies, and who, watching him with equal bitterness and distrust on his side, frequently in the long chain of incidents that followed detected him almost at the moment when he put forth his hand. It was already suspected, indeed, in London that an alliance was under consideration at Versailles and Madrid between France and Spain and the Colonies, and M. de Vergennes was called upon to deny it on the very day when Bonvouloir sailed for Philadelphia. The French Ambassador reported that Lord Rochford had presented his compliments to him to announce that a rumor of this character had recently been received from America, and that the British Government would feel great pleasure in being able to deny it upon authority; to which again M. de Vergennes replied that the King's spirit of justice would forever prevent him from giving encouragement to the rebels: "And this," said he, "is a truth which you must not hesitate to repeat upon every occasion when you can do so without affectation. We do not know what hopes the Americans may entertain, or upon what Power they may

rely; we have as yet had no appeal from them; but if they were to come to us, we should very properly dismiss them, although we should guard their secret." [1]

It was perfectly true that the French ministry had had no direct communication up to that time with the Colonies in America, though M. de Vergennes knew that shipments of munitions of war were being made from French ports, and we have seen that he was himself secretly considering the subject of supporting the Revolution. But he treated the communication of Lord Rochford as a fiction intended to draw from M. de Guines a declaration which he might use in Parliament, and with which he might possibly discourage the Americans if they entertained a hope of aid from France, although Lord Rochford had said that the information came to General Burgoyne in a private letter from General Lee, who had given his word of honor that the Americans were certain they should be supported by Spain and France. This letter, however, was never shown to the Ambassador. M. de Vergennes repeated his instructions to the Ambassador to keep a watchful eye upon the Colonies, admitting now that he regarded their destiny as of very great importance: "I beg of you to continue to inform us of everything that you hear relating to affairs in America. That is at present the object of our constant attention." [2] It continued to be the point of greatest interest, for he still expected that in some manner England would make peace with her Colonies, and he could not bring himself to believe that either the English ministry or the Opposition in Parliament would force the issue to a point of absolute separation, although he was convinced they could never be brought back by force of arms, and only with great difficulty by negotiation. Notwithstanding very great preparations were being made in England to send additional forces to America, to increase

[1] Angleterre, t. 511, No. 160 : Doniol, La Participation de la France, i. 150.
[2] Angleterre, t. 511, No. 44 : Doniol, La Participation de la France, i. 171.

the number of regiments employed and the number of companies in the regiments, for carrying on the campaign of the following year, he wrote to M. de Guines in August that this seemed to him like a vain boast, or a threat intended to impose upon the Colonists; for if the Government had wished to wage active war upon them in its proper sense, and destroy them, it would not have waited until the next year to open the campaign, giving the Americans notice and allowing them, of course, time to prepare also; it would have surprised them by rapid and well-sustained attacks which the Colonists would not have been able to defend themselves against or to recover from, but which would have borne them down by the mere weight of superior numbers and equipment. Neither did he believe that the English army would march inland from the coast; because, if it did, it would place itself in too great danger of being cut off when it should try to go back.

But upon the 25th of the same month the Ambassador at London announced that the English Government had issued its proclamation of "Rebellion," which startled M. de Vergennes to such an extent that he freely admitted that it "changes absolutely the order of our combinations and takes away beyond recall any hope of conciliation that might yet have remained." [1] He declared that the proclamation which the English had published made it impossible for them then to turn back; that the issue had been joined, and that either America must succumb or the ministry itself, a fact the consequences of which Lord Rochford had probably not rightly estimated when he boasted that he had advised the step; and it seemed to the Ambassador, indeed, that, as things were going then, it was not unlikely that scaffolds would yet be erected in England.

Nothing could have been more gratifying to M. de

[1] Letter of 3d September, 1775, Angleterre, t. 511, No. 124; Doniol, La Participation de la France, i. 174.

Vergennes than the increasing embarrassments in Great Britain; with intense enjoyment he looked on at what, to him, was an act of self-destruction, so opportune, however, in the policy of France that what he had not been able to do against England for lack of strength, England was doing against herself, as if playing directly into his hands. To the Marquis d'Ossun, at Madrid, he gave open expression of his delight: "If the English are foolish enough to destroy their force by their own force, to exhaust their finances and to engulf themselves in a civil war, why should we interrupt them? Let us quietly watch them consume themselves, as long as the condition of things will permit them to do it. Even if we do not acquire by it a greater amount of intrinsic force, our relative power is bound to be increased."[1] He instantly seized upon this opportunity to advance a step further upon the ground he wished to occupy, by assuming a bolder tone in his diplomatic correspondence with Great Britain, making use of the alliance which it was reported King George was endeavoring to conclude with the Empress of Russia. M. de Vergennes did not believe this report in the least; he had given excellent reasons against its authenticity in a very clever state paper which had elicited from the King of Spain genuine and flattering praise; but with him everything was an instrument that came to his hand when he could turn it against England, and this news was current, therefore, of course, he was privileged to use it; and it happened to furnish him an occasion which up to that time he had been embarrassed to find, namely, that of admitting the joint armament of France and Spain and giving to England a presentable reason for it. Therefore, with much assumed apprehension, he instructed the Ambassador in London to intimate to the British Government that the Courts of France and Spain looked with alarm

[1] Letter of 21st November, 1775, Espagne, t. 578, No. 95: Doniol, La Participation de la France, i. 204.

upon the introduction of Russia into the quarrel with the Colonies; that Russia was a powerful nation both on land and on sea, which would not be likely to enter in with England unless she had something to gain besides the miserable subsidy which might be paid for her troops; that no doubt she had in this matter some ulterior purpose which was not disclosed; that it was not likely that this purpose was in any wise directed against the possessions of her allies in America, therefore it must be against the West Indies; in fact, that Spain and France were agreed that they must arm themselves in order to defend their colonies and that they might be ready at any moment to repel attack. The word was spoken. The attitude of the two Crowns was no longer to be merely passive. It took only a few days to dispose of the rumors of a Russian alliance; but M. de Vergennes had gained his point.

It was, after all, nothing more than an avowal of what the English Government already knew. They were never blind to what was going on in France. Lord Stormont had begun that remarkable surveillance upon the actions of the ministry which he carried out with unremitting diligence during the next few years, performing a sort of police duty the aim of which was to follow every step that might be taken by which France as a neutral Power should go beyond the limit of international comity, and to prevent any attempt at giving aid or encouragement to the revolted Colonies, with such success that for a tolerably long period he was the most hated man, and perhaps it would not be going too far to say, the most feared, in France. He was now almost daily protesting to the ministry against American ships loading with munitions of war in French ports, against contracts being made for the same purpose by French merchants, to whom he insisted that prohibitions should issue, and obliging the Government at least to promise that it would take repressive measures, or to profess that it had already done so. The

French began to think that he knew by intuition what they were doing. The first question asked, after they decided in any case what they themselves would do, was, what Lord Stormont was likely to do; for he was sure to do something. Consequently M. de Vergennes's announcement created no surprise in England, and produced no immediate result there. It aided him, however, by keeping alive the interest which he had created at the Spanish Court, where he availed himself of every occasion like this to emphasize the community of purpose in the policy of the two Crowns. The Spanish Government increased its garrisons in the West Indies, and M. de Grimaldi announced that he was convinced that this great superiority of armed forces in America was likely to tempt England into some enterprise against the French and Spanish colonies, especially against the former.

CHAPTER III.

RELATIONS OF THE FRENCH GOVERNMENT WITH THE COLONIES OF NORTH AMERICA.

THE Comte de Vergennes had now substantially reached the point where the Duc de Choiseul had left the subject of the American Colonies several years before; he was renewing the policy of that statesman, developing it in the light of succeeding events, and preparing to carry it on to completion, with greatly increased likelihood of success, because the Revolution had fairly begun and many of the results which the former minister had merely predicted had now actually been produced. He found considerable divergence of opinion in France as to the policy of encouraging rebellion directed against a recognized authority, and there was a fear lest this example might even prove dangerous to France in the government of her own colonies, especially if the Americans should establish an independent Power in such close proximity to them, and that Power a republic. The King himself had no sympathy with the "insurgents," and felt no disposition to encourage them. But the great incentive which the minister dexterously employed was the belief that the restoration of the glory of France lay in the success of the American Revolution. That overcame all objection, and with it he labored to create sentiment in the ministry. At the close of the year 1775 he prepared a series of notes in which he stated the problem as he understood it, examined it in its bearings upon France, and explained in such detail his views as to the policy to be pursued by the Government that they form a most valuable document

in which the attitude of France is described in his own language. These notes, which he called "Réflexions," and which were intended only for the eyes of the King and of M. de Maurepas, are preserved in the Archives of France.[1] They present the subject of the intervention of France in the American Revolution, as follows:

"RÉFLEXIONS.

"The quarrel which is now going on between England and her Colonies is one of those events of extreme importance which deserve the attention of all other Powers, by reason of the influence which it may have upon the political existence of Great Britain. France especially, and Spain, have an immediate interest in following its details and its progress, and in forecasting its probable effect.

"There is reason to believe that the object of the Colonies is no longer simply to redress their grievances, but that they have come to the determination to throw off the yoke of the mother-country. England openly imputes this intention to them, and the efforts she is making to overcome it prove to what extent she feels and fears the effects which would result from its execution.

"If the Colonies are left to themselves, it is probable that Great Britain will ultimately conquer and subject them; and in that event she will be the mistress to prescribe for them such laws as she may see fit. The result of this forced submission will be, indeed, that the Court of London will be driven into extraordinary and ever-continuing expenditures in order to restrain and preserve the Colonies, which will retain a perpetual and irrepressible tendency toward independence; but, on the other hand, she will at least continue to hold the mercantile advantages which she has enjoyed up to this time from her commerce with America, and she will consequently be able to support her manufactures and her shipping. Above all, she will prevent the Colonies from putting into the balance a very considerable weight in favor of any other Power, as they would do if they were independent. So that, by whatever means Great Britain maintains her supremacy in America, we may fairly say that it will result in very considerable advantage to her; whereas, if she lost it, she would suffer an incalculable injury, as we shall show hereafter.

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[1] États-Unis, Mémoires et Documents de 1765 à 1778, t. 1, No. 4: Doniol, La Participation de la France, i. 243.

"This twofold truth appears naturally to indicate the part which France should take in the quarrel now existing between England and her Colonies.

"England is the natural enemy of France. She is an enemy at once grasping, ambitious, unjust, and perfidious. The invariable and most cherished purpose in her politics has been, if not the destruction of France, at least her overthrow, her humiliation, and her ruin. This is the real motive of the wars which for a long period she has waged against us; this reason of state always dominates every other consideration; and when it speaks, all means are just, legitimate, and even necessary, provided they are efficient. This condition of things, as well as the care which France is bound to take of its own preservation, authorizes and even invites her to seize every possible opportunity to reduce the power and the greatness of England; whilst, on the other hand, our policy makes it a duty for us to do so. Starting, then, with this double truth, it becomes necessary for us to inquire whether the attitude and the present circumstances of the Colonies are such as to lead us to this result. They are at open war with the central Government; their purpose is to throw off the yoke of domination; they appeal to us to give them aid and succor. If we accede to the wishes of the Colonies, and presupposing that we give them effective assistance, it would seem that the following advantages must result: 1st, the power of England will be reduced, and our own increased to the same degree; 2d, her commerce will suffer an irreparable loss, whilst ours will be increased; 3d, it is very probable that, in the course of events, we should be able to recover a part of our possessions in America which the English have taken away from us, such as the right to fish on shore, that of the Gulf of St. Lawrence, Isle Royale, etc. We make no reference to Canada.

"But it may be said that the independence of the English Colonies will produce a revolution in the New World, that they will scarcely be quiet again and assured of their liberty before they will be seized with a desire for conquest, whence might result the invasion of our colonies and of the rich possessions of Spain in South America.

"There are two considerations, however, which ought to reassure those who fear dangers of that sort. 1st. The war which the Colonies are now carrying on will exhaust and impoverish them to such an extent that it will be a long time before they can think of taking up arms to attack their neighbors. 2d. There is every reason to believe that if the Colonies attain their purpose

they will give to their new Government the form of a Republic, and it is generally conceded, as the result of experience, that Republics very rarely have the love of conquest, and those about to be established in America will have it all the less (for it is understood that each province will become a separate Republic and that they shall have no relation to each other except that of a political confederation), because they already know the happiness and the advantages of commerce; they need industries, and consequently they want peace in order to procure for themselves the commodities of life as well as a great number of things of prime necessity. It is safe to say, therefore, that the fear of seeing the Americans undertake, sooner or later, the invasion of their neighbors' territory is without even a seeming foundation, and is not worthy to be taken into consideration. Even supposing that the Americans should overrun the Spanish possessions, it is by no means certain that such a revolution would be prejudicial to France; I except, of course, the obligations contained in the Family Compact.

"Admitting, then, the interest that France has in favoring the independence of the English Colonies, it becomes necessary to examine: 1st, what kind of assistance she can give them; 2d, when this assistance can best be brought to bear; 3d, what is likely to be the result of it.

"FIRST POINT.

"England has subsidized seventeen thousand men in Germany, to whom she adds twenty-odd thousand national troops; she will therefore have in America an army of less than forty thousand men. The Colonies, on their side, have now on foot fifty thousand regular troops, well clothed, well armed, well disciplined, and well commanded. They have nearly as many volunteers who serve without pay and only ask to fight, and they will have by next spring more than thirty vessels at sea, of from twelve to forty guns. Finally, they have a treaty of neutrality, and, in case of necessity, of alliance, with five savage nations who hate the English. But they are in need, 1st, of munitions of war; 2d, of ready money; 3d, of a good navy. Therefore, in order to assist the Americans effectively, we should have to provide for these three necessities if we concluded at any time to respond to their appeal for help.

"They would send their vessels into our ports laden with products and take a return cargo of arms and munitions, paying for them, not in ready money, but in products to be deliv-

ered either at Santo Domingo or at one of our ports in Europe. This exchange of traffic could be made without obliging the Government to appear in any way; we should only need a capable, faithful, and discreet agent in each of our ports where the American vessels came to load or to discharge. This agent would deal directly with the captains of vessels, and they would cover up their transactions so as to escape the protests of the Court of London. We should have no further interest in these shipments, which would be made for the account and risk of the Americans.

"As to the demand for money, that presents at first sight some rather serious difficulties: while it seems impossible to reject it entirely, we should, however, be obliged to modify and curtail it. The following are the reflections which occur to me upon that subject. The Colonies have established a paper currency for their domestic necessities, which now circulates freely and appears likely to sustain its value; therefore they would not need specie for the interior of the provinces. They will find it necessary merely for their operations abroad; that is to say, in paying for their purchases. We might, therefore, it appears to me, reduce their expenditures by supplying to them, so far as possible, the articles which they are obliged to buy abroad, taking in exchange their products and furnishing them, beyond this, with such an amount of specie as might be found necessary in order to keep their affairs in good condition.

"The subject of the navy cannot be so easily disposed of as the two former. We should not be able to send our vessels to sea without declaring openly in favor of the Colonies and, consequently, incurring a war with Great Britain; and if we supplied them clandestinely, the Court of London, upon discovering it, would justly accuse us of being secret abettors of the rebellion in its Colonies. The result of these observations is that the former of these alternatives cannot be carried out until such time as we shall be obliged by circumstances to make war upon the English; and the latter is surrounded by very great difficulty if we attempt to conceal it from the Court of London. But there is still a way out. We could send to Santo Domingo, or some other point agreed upon, a number of merchant-ships suitable for war; the Americans would go there and receive them at their own risk, making fictitious contracts with the French captains. Thus the 'insurgents' would be enabled to increase their navy with our help, without our appearing in any manner as parties to the transaction.

"SECOND POINT.

"*As to the time at which France should openly assist the Colonies.*

"According to our information, the 'insurgents' are at present strong enough to resist the forces which England is sending to America; they have arms and munitions of war, therefore it would not be necessary to supply them with anything now. But it is to be feared that before long they will have exhausted their means, so that the difficulty of increasing their supplies, and the consequent alarm, may weaken their courage and tempt them to abandon their undertaking, by submitting before they are forced by impoverishment to do so. It is, therefore, essential that France should give immediate attention to this point; she must sustain the courage and the perseverance of the 'insurgents' by flattering them with the hope of effective aid as soon as circumstances will permit it. She must give them to understand that the time for giving this aid depends upon their success; and she must encourage them to believe that the date may be fixed at latest at the end of the next campaign. In this manner France will not be compromised either as to the 'insurgents' or as to the Court of London, and she will be getting herself ready to strike a decisive blow as soon as events have sufficiently matured to admit of it.

"THIRD POINT.

"*What will be the effect of our assistance?*

"Starting with the principle that we ought to favor the independence of the Colonies, it follows necessarily that we ought to help them as soon as we believe that we can do so with success; therefore that becomes a point which it is important to consider and to establish. In order to form some estimate in this connection, it may be well to await the effect produced by the efforts which the Court of London proposes to make in the coming spring; its preparations are immense; they exhaust, or very nearly so, the resources of Great Britain. If the Court does not meet at once with such success as to foreshadow either the submission or the destruction of the Colonies, we shall conclude that Great Britain has not sufficient means to accomplish that undertaking, and then France would risk so much less in coming upon the scene, that is to say, in declaring war, because the forces of the Americans will have been sufficient to arrest the British armies, and by joining with them we shall make their triumph sure.

"But, laying aside this plan of action, and supposing that France remains absolutely still,—that is to say, that she not only

does not aid the Colonies openly, but does not even give them the least secret encouragement: will such a course protect us against war? Affairs in America present two hypotheses: upon the first, England will triumph over the Americans and subjugate them; upon the second, that Power will be repelled by them and forced to agree to their independence. In the one case, as in the other, it is possible that the Court of London will feel obliged to attack our colonies: in the former, to avenge the assistance which she will suppose we have given to her Colonies (for she will suppose this if her interests and her views demand it, however passive our conduct may have been); in the latter, to indemnify herself at our expense, and at the expense of Spain, for the immense outlay incurred by her in bringing the Colonies to terms. This expedition will appear easy to the English, and it will be so in fact, in view of the forces both on land and at sea which they will have in America; and, besides, it will appear necessary to the British ministers, either to establish their reputation and to win glory, or to lessen the reproaches which the nation is sure to cast upon them in the event of failure,—perhaps even to save their heads from the scaffold.

"Consequently, from whatever point of view we consider the outcome of the troubles in America, and whatever our conduct may be at this juncture, it will not assure to us the continuance of peace; we cannot therefore assume its preservation as the basis of our policy, and since the circumstances of the case, from whatever point of view we consider them, appear certain to lead us into war, it is the part of prudence to make ready in advance the means which will enable us to carry it on with advantage and success. We venture to believe that the most effective means would be to make sure of the Colonies, and, in case of necessity, to make common cause with them."

This was the programme of the French Cabinet just before our Declaration of Independence. It shows an intercourse with the agents of the Colonies quite beyond what the official correspondence of the time bears witness to, and implies the study of details which we have no longer before us, but of which we distinctly see the traces. It leaves no doubt that it was the intention of France to injure Great Britain the moment an opportunity offered itself in any part of the world, and that, in the opinion

of the Secretary of State, that opportunity was at hand in the quarrel of the mother-country with her American Colonies. The most difficult obstacle for M. de Vergennes at the moment was the unwillingness of the King, who wavered between his unquestioned desire on the one hand to do right at all times, and a fear on the other hand that in some way, should he fail to listen to the representations of his ministers of state, who had long experience in affairs and whose judgments must be wise, he might lose the favorable opportunity to re-establish the position of France and thus to render his reign illustrious in her annals. His hesitating mind was influenced also, no doubt, by the opposition at Court on the part of the personal enemies of M. de Vergennes, who were jealous of his position in the Cabinet, who had obtained an intimation of his policy, and who, having no reason to regret its possible failure, took pains that it should be spoken of unfavorably before the King. For a time its progress was absolutely arrested.

Meanwhile the versatile and indefatigable Caron de Beaumarchais, afterward made famous by his "Marriage of Figaro" and his "Barber of Seville," clever alike in intrigue, in commerce, and in letters, had been employed by M. de Vergennes as a secret agent in London, where his talents and his social qualities gave him admittance to polite society and furnished him an opportunity to note what took place, as well as to glean information from people of all shades of political belief. Independent of the Ambassador, and without official credit, Beaumarchais occupied the position of actual representative in London, and held the confidence of the Cabinet at Versailles, for the moment, to a greater degree than M. de Guines; and, whilst he ferreted out every chance for intrigue with people, either in England or in any of the ports of France, who were willing to furnish arms or munitions of war, and let slip no bit of news upon which he could base a plan or

a calculation in favor of the Colonists in America, his reports were received with intense interest at home, where they not only exerted the strongest influence upon the minds of M. de Vergennes and M. de Maurepas, but were instrumental also in determining the King to yield.

His enthusiasm and his patriotic appeals for the glory of France, his assertion that this was the moment of all others to assure it, which he repeated with increasing fervor, his ardent representations of the opposition of a great part of the English people to the policy of the ministry, and his reiterated statement that it was the belief of all wise men that this uprising in the Colonies would end in the destruction of the British Empire, which France needed only to help along in order to recover her honor, her power, and her lost possessions, that patriotism summoned her to do this, and that if she failed to listen now she would stand condemned in all history, undoubtedly contributed largely to the result.

That he was working directly to influence the King, we know by his letter to M. de Vergennes of the 24th of November, 1775,[1] written at Versailles, whither he had gone from London:

"Monsieur le Comte,—Instead of waiting for the King's reply, which will doubtless announce his decision, should you approve of writing to him again that I am here, that you have seen me, that I am trembling lest in a matter so easy and so necessary, perhaps the most important that the King may ever have to decide, His Majesty may choose the negative, and that, whatever his motives, I beg him in mercy not to decide either way without having first allowed me to plead with him for one quarter of an hour, respectfully to demonstrate to him the necessity of undertaking, the facility of acting, the certainty of succeeding, and the immense harvest of glory and repose to be obtained for his reign from the smallest seed planted so advantageously now? May the guardian angel of this state turn favorably the heart of the King, and give us the success so greatly to be desired."

[1] Angleterre, t. 513, No. 3: Doniol, La Participation de la France, i. 251.

During this indecision the new year of 1776 came in. M. de Vergennes was still surrounded by the intrigues against him at Court, and he had become the object of very serious personal attacks which obliged him to suspend his correspondence with Beaumarchais and to give attention to his own defence. But the King's confidence in M. de Vergennes and his attachment for him, as well as the persistent efforts of Beaumarchais, ultimately won the day.

Precisely how this result was accomplished we cannot tell, because Beaumarchais never disclosed his relations with the ministry; and, although we know it was through a communication written by him and shown to the King, the document itself is not in the Archives, nor is there anywhere a statement of what it contained. The only trace of it is in the following letter from M. de Vergennes on the 22d of January, 1776, to Louis XVI.:[1]

"SIRE,—I have the honor to hand to Your Majesty a communication from the Sr. de Beaumarchais, without excepting anything, even as to what he intended to say to me alone. If I had felt at liberty to suppress any part, it would have been that which is purely personal. The question here relates to facts which I am not in a position to verify, and of which the proof would probably be very difficult to establish. What appears to me to be the most important is the description of the actual condition of affairs and the consequences which may possibly result. England is upon the verge of despair. I readily believe, as the Sr. de Beaumarchais intimates, that the change of ministry may not be far off. The ministers have perhaps only a short time left in which to protect themselves against the storm, or to resort to desperate measures to ward off the danger which threatens their heads. This prediction would seem to call for the most careful foresight on the part of Your Majesty; though it is perhaps easier to imagine what ought to be done than to point out the means or to put them into execution.

"Since I shall be able to reply to the Sr. de Beaumarchais only after having heard the orders of Your Majesty, I humbly beg you to appoint a time when I may go to receive them."

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[1] Archives Nationales, année 1776: Doniol, La Participation de la France, i. 253.

The communication from Beaumarchais which accompanied this letter appears to have had the desired result, and to have affected favorably the mind of the King to the policy to be pursued toward England which M. de Vergennes and Beaumarchais were strenuously laboring to carry out; for from this time forward the Secretary of State appears to have had at least the royal acquiescence in the programme generally outlined by him in the "Réflexions" quoted above. It happened also in this connection that an incident at the Court of France offered him at that moment an opportunity to forward his purposes the more comfortably to himself by getting rid for a time of the oppressive watchfulness of Lord Stormont, which he took advantage of immediately. The Comte de Guines, Ambassador at London, whose conduct of diplomatic affairs had for a long time not been satisfactory to M. de Vergennes, had now fallen into disfavor with the King, who directed him to be recalled, and the order was sent on the 26th of January, 1776. Here was a chance which the Secretary of State could not have prepared more to his liking; because if the Embassy at London were left vacant by the French Government, King George would certainly not continue his Ambassador at Paris when France was represented only by a chargé-d'affaires in England; whilst if an English chargé were left in Paris he would be much more easy to deal with than the Ambassador, whose personal distinction and social position gave him a far wider range of intercourse and consequently a much larger field of observation; and when that Ambassador was Lord Stormont, the relief at being free from him for a time was second only to that, which was not then attainable, of getting rid of him altogether.

Skilfully, therefore, M. de Vergennes approached the King through M. de Maurepas in this delicate matter; for, whilst he was anxious to have a successor appointed in order to prevent the return to London of M. de Guines,

in whose ability he had no confidence, he was equally anxious to have the vacancy continued as long as it reasonably could be; and in this double purpose he succeeded admirably. The Marquis de Noailles was appointed Ambassador to England, but with instructions to go to his post six months later, and, as was expected, the English Government gave Lord Stormont a leave of absence on the 29th of March, and left the Embassy with a chargé-d'affaires. The French representative in London during the interim was M. Garnier, an old employee of the Foreign Office, who had been eight years in London, who was in perfect accord with M. de Vergennes, and who could be implicitly relied upon to act in sympathy with the aims and purposes of the "Réflexions."

Thus we find M. de Vergennes, at the beginning of the year 1776, determined upon war; not avowedly so as yet, except to the King and to the head of the Cabinet, with whom he concerted his plans and discussed the advantages to be obtained for France by a timely intervention in the present disturbances, but fully persuaded, nevertheless, that circumstances were so forming themselves that the time to strike was close at hand; and this persuasion shaped his policy from that time forward. He never swerved from the direction he had thus taken. Indeed, to all intents and purposes, so far as secret enmity could carry him, and a fixed purpose not only to foment the existing embarrassments by encouraging the Revolution in America, but to lend a helping hand whenever he could do so without being obliged to declare himself openly, he was at war already with England.

Beaumarchais served him as an important factor in this, both at London and in France; his diplomatic correspondence with Spain, which is very voluminous at this period, was skilfully framed to keep this purpose constantly before the Spanish Court; and he now had Bonvouloir working for it in America. In December,

1775, after a stormy and dangerous voyage of one hundred days, Bonvouloir had reached Philadelphia, whence he wrote at once, though his communication did not arrive, by reason of delays and the indirect method of its transmission, until the last of February, 1776. He reported that he found the country, as he had expected, in an inconceivable state of agitation; that the confederates were making immense preparations for the campaign of the following spring, in spite of the rigor of the climate, although they needed three important things,—a good navy, ready money, and provisions; but that it must be admitted they were led by "de bonnes têtes." He had succeeded almost immediately in forming relations with the Committee of Secret Correspondence, to whom he was introduced as a private individual by a French bookseller living in Philadelphia, called Daymons. He wrote that he was kept regularly informed as to their deliberations and fully acquainted with what took place even in the utmost secrecy; that they all said they would fight for their liberty, and would be free, cost what it might, though they knew they were not strong enough to make war at sea, and that they looked to France to help them in this respect and to protect their commerce. Bonvouloir protested that he had never told the committee anything that could indicate a connection of any kind with the French ministry; though he evidently allowed them to draw their own conclusions as to that, which he imagined they had done, because, he said, he had good reason to know that they would never believe he had come across the ocean in the winter without some very good reason; and he continued,—

"I have made them no offer, absolutely none, but have *only* promised to render them every service *in my power* without *compromising* myself and without being *responsible for the results, in any way.* They asked me if France would help them, and at what price. I replied that I believed France *wished them well.* Whether

she would help them? That that *might very well be.* Upon what basis? That *I did not know,* but if such a thing happened it would no doubt be upon just and equitable conditions, and, for that matter, *if they thought well of it,* they should make their propositions; that I had some good acquaintances, and I should undertake to *present* their demands, without *anything more.*

"They asked me whether I thought it wise for them to send a Deputy Plenipotentiary to France. I answered that I thought that would be precipitate, even hazardous; that everything that took place in London was known in France, and what occurred in France was known in London, and that this would be a dangerous step, in the very face of the English; but that if they authorized me to do so, *perhaps* I should be able to get a reply which would direct them in their future conduct; that in the mean time I could not advise them one way or the other, I was merely a private person, an inquisitive traveller, but I should be delighted if I could be of any service to them through my *acquaintances;* that I should not expose them, or myself, or anybody; that in matters of such gravity it was important to be very careful, especially as I had no *right* and no *authority,* and that I should be *responsible* for only one thing, namely, not to betray their confidence."

The Committee sent to Bonvouloir, in writing, three questions, to which they asked him to reply. 1st. What was the disposition of the French Court toward the North American Colonies; whether it was friendly; and in what way they might have authentic assurance of it. 2d. Whether the Americans could obtain two good engineers in France, well recommended; and if so, how that might be accomplished. 3d. Whether the Americans could obtain directly from France arms and munitions of war in exchange for the products of the Colonies; and whether their vessels would be allowed to enter and clear from French ports. To these questions M. Bonvouloir replied as follows:

"I shall reply, gentlemen, as positively as I can to the questions you have done me the honor to ask me, and I shall inform you so far as a private man can be informed himself who has no connection with the ministry; but I shall reply according to my conjectures, to public opinion, and to the judgment of some of my

friends. 1st. You ask what the intention of France is as to the Colonies of North America. I think I am not going too far when I say that she wishes you well, and that *I believe* she has never had any other feeling than that of good will toward you. But, in order to know this of any one with certainty, the way is to address him directly. The step is a dangerous one in this case, and requires great caution ; I cannot advise you for it or against it. I shall not assume it myself ; the matter is too delicate. 2d. France is quite able to furnish you two good engineers, and even more. The only way is, to ask for them. I have done this for you, gentlemen, without becoming responsible for its success ; although I hope for that, because I have some good correspondents. 3d. Whether you can obtain arms and other munitions directly from France in exchange for your products. As this is a question of one merchant with another, I see no great difficulty as far as France is concerned. I shall give you the address of certain good correspondents, without, however, making myself *liable* in any way. You can undertake it at your own risk and peril, for it is possible that England may not let you alone, and you cannot expect to be protected ; and I should not advise you to ship everything to a single port, because that might attract attention. I cannot say whether you will be allowed to enter and clear from French ports ; that would be equal to an open declaration in your favor, and war might follow. But it is possible that the Government might close its eyes to it, which is all you require. I have the honor to repeat to you, gentlemen, that I am not at all responsible. I am of very small consequence, myself ; I have some good acquaintances, that is all. If I should be so fortunate as to succeed, I should be amply repaid by the honor of your confidence and the pleasure of doing you a service." [1]

The Committee of Secret Correspondence, which consisted of Dr. Franklin, Mr. Harrison, Mr. Johnson, Mr. Dickinson, and Mr. Jay, some of the *bonnes têtes* who impressed Bonvouloir with being able to take care of themselves, evidently understood very nearly, if not quite, what his relation was to the Government of France, and what conclusions to draw as to the sentiment entertained there toward the Colonies, as well as the probability of a favorable reply if they should adopt his suggestion and

[1] Quoted by M. Doniol, La Participation de la France, i. 267.

make their proposition directly to the Cabinet. They concluded to do this; and, in order the more effectively to accomplish their object, they determined to have a representative of the Congress in France. For that purpose they selected Silas Deane, of Connecticut, on the 3d of March, 1776; and he very shortly afterward set sail for Europe.

All this was most acceptable to M. de Vergennes; it confirmed the expectations he had allowed himself to indulge in, and it encouraged him to continue his undertaking with renewed vigor. Up to that time he had disclosed his opinion of the situation only to the King and M. de Maurepas, in the analysis contained, as we have seen, in the "Réflexions." Now, however, it became necessary to enlarge his audience, and to secure, if possible, the co-operation of the other members of the King's Cabinet, by whom, if his views met with their approval, they should be officially adopted as the fixed policy of the Government.

Each minister, or "Secretary of State," as he was called, was absolute in the decision of questions relating to his own department, in regard to which he was responsible only to the King. But it was customary, whenever a matter of very grave importance presented itself to either of the Secretaries, to go to the King and ask that His Majesty should designate a Council composed of such other of the Secretaries as he might name, to whom the subject-matter should be submitted; and, after a full discussion, each one present was usually called upon to hand to the King, within a reasonable time, his opinion in writing as to the course proper to be pursued by the Government.

M. de Vergennes adopted this method, in the following letter to King Louis:

"SIRE,—As it is possible that the crisis in the affairs of North America may extend to the interests of France and Spain, which Your Majesty has with superior wisdom already pointed out, the

most enlightened foresight may even find itself embarrassed to determine what it would be most advantageous for the two Powers to do under such extremely delicate circumstances. Nevertheless, since it has become indispensable for us to reach some conclusion, I have brought together what have seemed to me to be the most important considerations to serve as a basis of deliberation. I have the honor to transmit them to Your Majesty. I beg you to read them over, and if you consider them worthy of further attention I beg Your Majesty to allow me to transmit copies of them to such of your ministers as you shall think proper to summon to the discussion of so grave a question. I shall invite each one of them to furnish, as soon as possible, an opinion in writing. This union of sentiments and of ideas is, perhaps, the most effective method by which to obtain a satisfactory light upon the subject." [1]

The document submitted herewith by the Secretary of State was entitled "Considérations." [2] It enlarged the ideas contained in the "Réflexions," modifying somewhat their too bold statements as to the purposes and ambition of France, which it might be safe to express in the close intimacy of the King's own apartment, but would not be wise to declare officially as the policy of the Government, and it conveyed their meaning in cautious and more skilfully devised language, intended especially to strengthen the interest of the Spanish Court and to foster the sentiment that the unity of the two Crowns was the only warrant of safety for either. The central thought is that favorite maxim of the Comte de Vergennes, that France and Spain were threatened with war, whatever might be the outcome of the American Revolution; because in the event either of success or of defeat Great Britain would have a pretext for attacking them. This reasoning performed conspicuous service in sustaining the theories and arguments developed by him in the "Considérations," which are as follows:

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[1] Doniol, La Participation de la France, i. 271.

[2] It is not dated, but was probably written in March, 1776.

"CONSIDÉRATIONS.[1]

"The attitude of England toward her Colonies of North America, and the possible and probable consequences of the issue of that quarrel, however it may result, undoubtedly present the weightiest reasons for the most serious attention on the part of France and Spain.

"The political calculations which we are able to base upon this great crisis are of such a nature that it is problematical whether the two Powers ought rather to wish for the subjection or the independence of the Colonies, and that in the one case as in the other they will still be threatened by dangers which it is perhaps not in the power of human foresight either to anticipate or to ward off.

"We shall not enter into the discussion which a development of these reflections would require, but shall confine ourselves to their demonstration by observing that if, on the one hand, we may regard the continuation of the civil war as of infinite advantage to the two Crowns, because it will exhaust both the conquerors and the conquered, yet, on the other hand, we shall still have to fear, 1st, that the English ministry, finding itself unable to continue, may hold out its hand toward a reconciliation; 2d, that the King of England, by conquering British America, may turn it into an instrument with which to subjugate European England also; 3d, that the English ministry, defeated upon the continent of America, may seek a compensation at the expense of France and of Spain, which would free them from their disgrace and afford them at the same time a means of conciliation with the 'insurgents,' to whom they would open the markets and secure the trade of the Islands; 4th, that the Colonies, once having become independent, and retaining no attachment to England, might become conquerors by necessity; because, being overstocked with their own products, they might seek by force an outlet in the sugar islands and in Spanish America, which would destroy the relations of our colonies to the central Government.

"These different suppositions may point with almost equal certainty to a war, more or less remote, with France and Spain. The first, because the Court of London might be tempted to employ the forces it has collected together in the too easy conquest offered by the West India Islands. The second, because the subjection of the home Government can be accomplished only by fomenting

[1] Etats-Unis, Mémoires et Documents de 1765 à 1778, No. 8: Doniol, La Participation de la France, i. 273.

the hatred and jealousy of the nation by a war the continuance of which would accustom it to the yoke, and the successful ending of which would make it certain. The third and last, because of the desperation of the ministry and the efforts to protect, perhaps, not only the heads of the ministers themselves, but even the person of the King, against the rage of the English people, by securing a conquest as useful as it is brilliant, and one through which they may escape the disgrace of a peace encumbered by the indemnity wrung from defeat, or by offensive terms of reconciliation.

"Such is, indeed, the actual situation of the Colonies of the two nations that, with the exception perhaps of the Havana, none of them is strong enough to resist even a part of the forces which England is sending to America; and the physical possibility of their conquest is but too evident.

"As to the moral likelihood of an invasion thus made without cause and contrary to the obligations both of public faith and of existing treaties, we should strangely deceive ourselves if we believed that the English are susceptible to the influence of any such considerations; neither gratitude nor a fair return for past conduct has any more effect upon them than the sacred rules of morality. It seems, indeed, as if they applauded our moral behavior with a sort of contempt. Experience has but too clearly shown that they regard as honorable and just everything which they consider beneficial to themselves and damaging to their rivals. The maxims of the greater part of their statesmen are well known; they do not consider the injury which France actually does them, but rather that which she might do at some future time. They feel that if England exhausts herself by the present war, and if France and Spain take such measures as their wisdom and their resources dictate, they will be unable at the end of the contest to resist the forces of the two Powers. This reflection has already been made; already the Opposition seems to have united upon this general principle with the party of the present ministry; already there is reason to fear that the ministerial party, recognizing their weakness, may seize the only means left to disengage themselves from the labyrinth in which they are entangled, by giving up the reins of power to the Opposition, and that Lords Chatham, Shelburne, Weymouth, Sandwich, and Richmond may hope in the same manner to govern and to preserve their popularity by making peace with America and by using the enormous mass of forces now equipped to correct the stipulations of the last treaty of peace, which they have never ceased to attack with the

utmost fury. The English of all political parties appear to agree in the belief that a popular war with France, or the invasion of Mexico, would end, or would at least soften, their domestic contests and would extinguish their national debt.

"In the midst of so many perils, the recognized desire of the King of France and the King of Spain for the continuance of peace warns us to advance with most careful footsteps. If the dispositions of these two Princes were warlike, if they chose to give way to the dictates of their own interests and perhaps to the justice of their cause, which is that of humanity so often offended by England, if their financial and military resources had reached the proper point of development and energy and were proportioned to their effective power, we should declare to them, no doubt, that Providence has pointed out the moment for the humiliation of England, that it has struck her with blindness, the certain precursor of her destruction, and that it is now time to take vengeance upon that nation for the menaces it has made ever since the beginning of this century against those who have unfortunately been its neighbors and its rivals. It would be necessary in that case to neglect no opportunity to make the approaching campaign as active as possible, or to secure advantages for the Americans. The degree of fury and exhaustion of both parties which would result would determine the instant to strike such decisive blows as to force England into the position of a second-rate Power; to snatch from her the empire which she assumes to exert in the four quarters of the earth with equal pride and injustice; and to rid the universe of an envious tyrant striving at once to absorb all power and all wealth.

"But this is not the point of view which the two monarchs are willing to take: their course appears at this juncture to be to confine themselves to a watchfulness which shall be at once circumspect and active.

"If this maxim be adopted, it will remain for us to determine by what line of conduct we shall best attain this result.

"Before concluding definitively, however, we are now in a position to establish certain results of the brief examination which has just been made. 1st. We must avoid compromising ourselves, and we must not arouse those evils which we wish to avert. 2d. We must not flatter ourselves, however, that inaction, even the most absolute and the most rigorous, will protect us from all suspicion; for we know that our present conduct is not entirely free from it. The English, accustomed to follow the direction of their own interests and to judge other people by themselves, will never

believe that we shall let slip so good an opportunity to injure them; even if they did believe it, they would pretend they did not, if they found an occasion to attack us; and Europe would be persuaded they were right, however we might deny it. 3d. The continuation of the war, at least for another year, seems desirable for the two Crowns, either because we wish the forces now being sent to America to be occupied in fighting the Colonists, or because the ministry would be changed of necessity if peace were to be declared now, or because the English army, weakened either by its victories or by its defeats, would thus be unable to undertake a vigorous enterprise, or, finally, because another year added to our measures of activity and watchfulness may in very many respects change the position of affairs. 4th. The most certain means by which to accomplish this result would be, on the one hand, to encourage the English ministry in the belief that the intentions of France and Spain are pacific, in order that they may not hesitate to embark in an active and expensive campaign; while, on the other hand, we should sustain the courage of the Americans by certain secret favors and by vague hopes which would prevent them from accepting the overtures of peace now being made to them, and which would contribute to ripen the ideas of independence which up to this time have only begun to germinate among them. The ills which the English oblige them to suffer will embitter their minds, they will carry on the war with so much more violence, and, in case the central Government should be victorious, it would require for a long time to come all the forces it can command to check the spirit of independence in the Americans, and it would not dare to expose itself to the efforts, combined with those of some foreign enemy, which they would make to recover their liberty.

"If we decide that all these considerations are as true and as substantial as they are probable, the natural deductions will appear to be:

"1st. That we ought to continue dexterously to encourage the feeling of security on the part of the English ministry as to the intentions of France and Spain.

"2d. That we ought to give to the *insurgents* secret aid in the way of munitions of war and money; that the advantages which we have already presupposed will justify this slight sacrifice; and that no consideration of dignity or of equity would forbid it.

"3d. That it would not accord with the dignity of the King, or with his interests, to make a treaty with the insurgents; and this

is proved by taking a few out of the mass of arguments which might be cited. Such a treaty would at best be valid only after they had secured their independence, and then only until it suited them to break it; its validity would also be limited by the continuance of the form of government under a changing and necessarily stormy administration; and, finally, it would remain in force only upon condition that the Navigation Act should not become the basis of a reunion between the mother-country and the Colonies. An alliance of that kind can never be firmly established except upon mutual interest; and it seems now that it will be time enough to consider the question when the liberty of British America shall have attained an actual existence.

"4th. That, if France and Spain give their aid, they must look for their reward in the accomplishment of the political result which for the moment they wish to secure, except so far as this may be modified by subsequent conditions and events.

"5th. Perhaps we should consider, as a matter of good politics, that a too marked apathy upon our part in the present crisis may be interpreted as the result of fear, and of that immoderate love of peace which during the last few years has been the cause of so many evils and so much injustice; and that England, encouraged by our supposed cowardice on the one hand and by our lack of means on the other, may become more exacting even than she is now, and may dare anything, either directly and openly, or by the insolence and injustice of her cruisers and her claims of right to search, and by those insults which she never can and never will wish to atone for, and which we never can and never will tolerate. The English respect those only who are strong enough to make themselves feared.

"6th. The result which the grouping of these facts and suggestions presents with the strongest evidence of truth is, the necessity of our putting ourselves into such a position that we may either hold the English within bounds, or may render it unsafe for them to attack, or may secure for ourselves the means to punish them. Wisely matured plans for the future which raise the efficient forces of the two monarchies to the level of their real power are at all times useful and proper; but when the public good is threatened by so many dangers upon all sides, an active watchfulness as to the future becomes absolutely necessary. It presents the only means by which at the same time to guard against possible evils and to repair the injury of those which we have not been able to avoid, especially since of all the conjectures that we are able to form as to the probable turn of

affairs, the one which is the least supported by the evidence of present facts is that peace can be preserved whatever may be the outcome of the war now going on between England and her Colonies.

"These are the various points of view from which this most important question has appeared susceptible of being considered, which it has been intended merely to indicate here to the wisdom and penetration of the King and his Council."

Stripped of its covering of guarded sentences and diplomatic asseverations as to the intentions of the two Governments, and as to the spirit of justice and love of peace which resided in the breasts of the two monarchs, the intention of M. de Vergennes is plainly to be seen in the substance of this document. He needed the assistance of Spain. He had determined that France should make war upon England, but he was unwilling to undertake that task, even during England's embarrassment with her Colonies, unless he had beside him the soldiers and sailors of the King of Spain and could draw support from the great resources of the Spanish realm. King Carlos III. had no desire, however, to make war upon so formidable an enemy without very great cause, or unless his interests were directly attacked; he preferred to live in peace, and his desire was to close his reign in tranquillity, if possible, for he was no longer young and he had no ambition for conquest. He regarded England as his enemy, because he suspected her of encouraging people with whom he was at war, as in the case of Portugal, which he believed to be constantly supported, both in Europe and in her possessions upon the South American continent, by the secret influence of the British Cabinet. Yet it is not likely that of his own accord he would have conceived the idea of fighting England for that. He resented the attitude of M. de Pombal toward Spain, and would gladly have seen the Portuguese Cabinet chastised for conduct which he regarded as offensive and insolent, in the administering of

which chastisement he might even have risked the displeasure of Great Britain; because, while he was honestly inclined toward peace, he would not have hesitated from fear of war to defend the dignity of his throne or the honor of his people. He was a proud king and intensely jealous of his territorial rights; he had said upon one occasion, "I do not want the possessions of other people, I am only anxious to keep what belongs to me; but, if anybody wishes to see me, he knows where I am to be found; and if any one undertakes to attack my Islands, he will find some one there to receive him."

That sentiment gave the cue to M. de Vergennes; the way to win over Spain was to prove that the Islands were in danger of attack; and upon that he erected the extraordinary theory that England intended to strike at the possessions of the two monarchies when she should have finished with the Colonies in America, whatever might be the result of that conflict; because, if they were defeated there, the British ministry would be obliged, in their political helplessness, to tear from France and Spain a part of their flourishing provinces and throw it down as a bait before the rage and fury of the English people, in order to save themselves from being dragged incontinently to the scaffold; or, on the other hand, if the war in America resulted favorably to the mother-country and the Colonies were subdued, the national arrogance of the British would hold unrestricted sway, and they would turn the victorious hordes of North America against the tempting islands in the Atlantic Ocean, if for no other reason than to punish France and Spain for the help they would be supposed to have given to the rebels. No plea of innocence could save the two Crowns; the English were sure to accuse them, and no possible line of conduct could shield them from an accusation which, although the English knew it to be unjust, they would still pretend there was cause for. Thus war must come,—war of insult, of ag-

gression, of wanton cruelty, of inconceivable baseness, but yet inevitable war. Nothing remained but to unite the two monarchies as closely as possible under the Family Compact, and to prepare together to resist its dreaded outbreak.

The real motive in all this argument was cunningly slipped forward under the insinuation that Providence had pointed out the moment for bringing humiliation upon the English people and for reducing their Government from its present supremacy to the degraded level of a second-rate nation; and there is not much doubt that this would have comprised the whole substance of the document if M. de Vergennes had believed that the disposition of the Spanish Court would justify him in stating explicitly what he intended and what he thought. How much of all this reasoning he really did believe it is impossible at this distance of time for us to determine; but there can be no question that, in his desire to excite the apprehension of the Spanish King, he greatly overstated what he considered to be the actual danger of war if France and Spain should remain entirely neutral; his own subsequent despatches prove this; for when the Spaniards, after having shown a sudden and unexpected willingness to brave a conflict with England in consequence of the attitude of Portugal, were in danger of anticipating events and were moving faster than he had intended, he showed how cleverly he could argue upon the other side and prove that, after all, if a war with England was to be expected at some future time, the danger of it was quite remote; it certainly was not imminent.

He was aiming a blow at England in connection with which he wanted the support of Spain; but he did not intend the Spaniards to strike the blow alone, or to strike without the directing hand of the French Cabinet, or at a time which did not seem to France the moment of advantage; nor did he desire to strike through the medium of

Portugal or Brazil, or to waste substance in any of the petty quarrels in which Spain was here and there involved. But if he should once have secured the co-operation of the Spanish Crown, so that he could count upon it beyond a question, his time and his place were already selected: the time was that moment when England should be most embarrassed by the perplexities of her civil war; and the place was in the British Colonies of North America.

This became, from the early part of the year 1776, the settled policy of the Cabinet, which was then very rapidly approaching the point at which France should give effective aid to the Colonists; the Secretary of State clearly defined it in his letter to the Marqués de Grimaldi, on the 3d of May, in which he informed him that up to that time the Government had had no understanding with the Americans, directly or indirectly, though it had "allowed them to enjoy all the facilities of trading in its ports and had closed its eyes to the sort of traffic which they had been able to carry on there," adding to this, however, that, as affairs in England were now drawing near to a crisis, it was the opinion of the Cabinet of Versailles that something more ought to be done for the Colonists than to continue to hold them upon the footing of mere tolerance.[1]

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[1] Espagne, t. 580, No. 70: Doniol, La Participation de la France, i. 374.

CHAPTER IV.

EFFORTS OF THE COMTE DE VERGENNES TO UNITE FRANCE AND SPAIN IN THE AMERICAN WAR.

In the mean time the "Considérations" had been submitted on the 12th of March, by command of the King, to a Council composed of the following ministers,—the Comte de Maurepas, M. Turgot, the Contrôleur-Général, M. de Sartine, and the Comte de Saint-Germain, each of whom submitted an opinion in writing, more or less closely following the reasoning of M. de Vergennes, and all of them agreeing with him in his conclusions, except Turgot, who treated the subject very profoundly, but who objected to a policy which was likely to lead the country into war, principally because it would involve enormous expenditures of money and would require the assumption of new financial burdens quite in opposition to his plans of re-establishing the credit of the kingdom by careful administration and rigid economy.

The protection of the French colonies did not appeal to the mind of M. Turgot as a subject of national importance, or one which ought to call forth great solicitude, because he had already adopted the theory that no country could long hope to retain its colonists as subjects, the day of colonization under control of the mother-country having gone by; that the Colonies of Great Britain were at that moment breaking away from her, Spain must prepare herself to see hers follow before many years, and those of France would naturally travel in the same direction. Therefore it would not be wise to engage in a war to protect property of so little value, and if England did

attack the French colonies, according to the reasoning of the "Considérations," and should even take them away, it would only be taking from France what, after all, she must lose, under the most favorable circumstances, sooner or later.

Nevertheless, the general opinion of the Council was in favor of adopting the arguments and conclusions of the "Considérations," the other ministers agreeing with M. de Vergennes, all of them ambitious for the glory of France, all actuated by a hope of seeing England's power broken, which the economics and political philosophy of Turgot could not destroy. The King consented finally to approve the policy of his ministry in their encouragement of the American Colonists to rebel against England, to permit connivance at their supplying themselves with munitions of war in French ports, and to allow of their obtaining secret but substantial aid in their struggle from the Government of France itself.

Louis XVI. was greatly influenced in this connection, no doubt, by a memoir which Beaumarchais, who was always working in entire accord with M. de Vergennes and was still the secret agent of the Cabinet in London, addressed to him about the same time, under the title of "La Paix ou la Guerre;"[1] which, taken in connection with the "Considérations," probably achieved the success of winning over the King's mind, and has therefore become for us an important document in connection with the participation of France in our Revolution. It reads as follows:[2]

"LA PAIX OU LA GUERRE.

"For the King alone.

"SIRE,—The famous quarrel between America and England, which is about to divide the world and to change the system of

[1] It bears the following note, in the handwriting of Beaumarchais: "Remis à M. le Cte. de Vergennes, cachet volant, le 29 Février, 1776."

[2] The text is printed by M. Doniol in his "Participation de la France," i. 402.

Europe, imposes upon each Power the necessity of considering how the event of this separation may influence it and may become either a benefit or an injury.

"But certainly the most interested of all the Powers is France, whose sugar islands have always been since the late peace the objects of the regrets and the hopes of the English; desires and regrets which will infallibly thrust us into war unless, by a weakness which it is impossible to imagine, we should consent to sacrifice our rich possessions in the Gulf to the chimera of a shameful peace more destructive than the very war we so greatly fear.

"In a former memoir, submitted to Your Majesty some three months ago by M. de Vergennes, I endeavored firmly to establish that Your Majesty's sense of justice could not be wounded in taking certain wise precautions against enemies who never exhibit great delicacy in those which they take against us.

"To-day, when the moment of violent crisis is rapidly approaching, I am forced to warn Your Majesty that the preservation of our possessions in America and the peace Your Majesty appears so earnestly to desire depend upon this one proposition: *We must help the Americans;* which I shall now proceed to demonstrate.

"The King of England, the Ministers, the Parliament, the Opposition, the nation, the English people, and the parties which are distracting the State, agree that they can no longer flatter themselves with the hope of bringing back the Americans, or that the great efforts now being made to subjugate them will meet with success. This is the cause, Sire, of those violent debates between the Ministry and the Opposition; of that flow and ebb of opinions accepted or rejected, which, while they do not help their business, serve to put the question in a clearer light. Lord North, afraid to steer alone into the violence of such a tempest, has just taken advantage of Lord Germaine to shift the whole burden of management upon his ambitious head.

"Lord Germaine, stunned by the outcries and lashed by the terrific arguments of the Opposition, now says to Lords Shelburne and Rockingham, party leaders, 'In the present state of affairs, gentlemen, do you dare to say to the nation that the Americans will accept the Navigation Act and will come again under the yoke, *upon the sole condition*, which is contained in Lord Shelburne's plan, *that they shall be restored to the position they occupied before the troubles of 1763?* If you dare to say this, gentlemen, then assume the ministry and make yourselves responsible for the safety of the State, at your own risk.'

"The Opposition, although inclined to take the minister at his word, and quite ready to say 'Yes,' is deterred only by the fear that the Americans, now perhaps encouraged by their success and emboldened by secret treaties with Spain and France, may refuse those very conditions which they begged for with clasped hands two years ago.

"On the other hand, Mr. L—— (M. de Vergennes will give Your Majesty his name),[1] the secret agent of the Colonies in London, absolutely discouraged by the failure of the attempts he has made through me to obtain through the French ministry a supply of powder and munitions of war, said to me to-day, 'For the last time, then, has France absolutely decided to refuse us all assistance and to make herself not only the victim of England but the wonder of all Europe by this incredible sluggishness? I am obliged myself to answer positively, and I await your reply before I do so. *We offer France, as the price of her secret aid, a secret commercial treaty by which we shall turn over to her, for a certain number of years after the declaration of peace, all the advantages by which we have enriched England for a century past, besides a guarantee as to her possessions to the extent of our power.* Do you not want it? I only ask of Lord Shelburne the time for a vessel to take to Congress the propositions of England and to return, and I can tell you beforehand what the decision of Congress will be in regard to them. They will issue immediately a public proclamation offering to all the nations of the world, in return for their assistance, the same conditions that I now offer secretly to you. And, in order to retaliate upon France and to force her to make a public declaration in regard to them which will commit her to the extreme, they will send into your ports the first prizes which they may make from the English: so that, whichever way you turn, this war which you fear so much and from which you seek to escape will become inevitable to you, for you will either admit our prizes into your ports or you will forbid them to enter; if you admit them, a rupture with England is certain; if you forbid them, Congress will instantly accept peace upon the conditions proposed by the central Government, and the outraged Americans will join all their forces with those of England to fall upon your islands and prove to you that the splendid efforts you have made to defend your possessions are precisely the causes which will deprive you of them forever.

"'Go, sir, back to France and present there this picture of

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[1] Arthur Lee.

our affairs. I shall shut myself up in the country until you return, in order not to be forced to give an answer before I shall have received yours. Say to your ministers that I am ready to follow you, if necessary, to confirm these statements; tell them that *I hear that Congress has sent two agents to the Court of Madrid for the same purpose, and I may add also that they have received a very satisfactory reply.* Shall the Council of France to-day enjoy the famous prerogative of being alone blinded to the glory of the King and to the interests of his kingdom?'

"This, Sire, is the striking and terrible picture of our situation. Your Majesty sincerely desires peace. The means to preserve it, Sire, will form the subject of examination in this memoir.

"Let us admit all the hypotheses possible, and let us examine them.

"What follows is very important.

"Either England will obtain in the present campaign the most complete success in America;

"Or the Americans will repel the English with loss;

"Or England will take the course, already adopted by the King, of abandoning the Colonies to themselves and of separating from them on terms of friendship;

"Or the Opposition will seize the ministry and will answer for the submission of the Colonies upon condition of their being restored to their position in 1763.

"Here are all the possible events grouped together: is there a single one which will not instantly cause the very war which you wish to avoid? Sire, for God's sake, deign to consider them with me.

"1st. If England triumphs over America, it can only be at enormous cost, both in money and in men. Now, the only compensation which the English have in view for so great a loss is, to seize in turn the French islands, in order by that means to make themselves the exclusive traders in the precious sugar crop, which alone can repair the damage done to their commerce; and this capture will also make them forever the absolute possessors of the benefits arising out of the unauthorized traffic now carried on by the continent with these same islands.

"In that event, Sire, it would only remain for you to choose between beginning too late an unproductive war, or sacrificing to the most shameful, idle peace all your American colonies and of losing two hundred and eighty millions of capital and more than thirty millions of revenue.

"2d. If the Americans win, they will be free at once; and the

English, made desperate at the sight of their existence reduced by three-quarters, will be all the more ready to redeem their loss by a compensation now become indispensable, in the easy capture of our American possessions; and we may rest assured that they will not fail to do it.

"3d. If the English think themselves obliged to abandon the Colonies to themselves without striking a blow, which is the secret wish of the King, the loss will be the same to their existence, and, their trade being equally damaged, the result in our case would be similar to the foregoing; except that in this event the English will be less weakened by a friendly separation than they would have been by a bloody and ruinous campaign, and they will be all the more prepared both in means and in facilities to seize our islands, which they will then not be able to do without if they wish to keep their own and to retain a foothold in America.

"4th. If the Opposition should come into power and should conclude a treaty of reunion with the Colonies, the Americans, angered against France, whose refusal alone will have driven them to submit to the central Government, threaten even now to join all their forces with those of England to seize our islands. They will indeed unite themselves with the mother-country only upon that condition; and God knows with what pleasure the ministry, then composed of Lords Chatham, Shelburne, and Rockingham, whose feelings toward us are notorious, would adopt the resentment of the Americans and without hesitation would wage the most stubborn and cruel war against you.

"What is to be done, then, in this extremity, to preserve peace and to retain our islands?

"You will preserve the peace that you long for, Sire, only by preventing at all hazards a peace between England and America and by preventing the complete triumph of one of them over the other; and the only way to accomplish this is to give such aid to the Americans as will make their forces equal to those of the English, but nothing more. And be assured, Sire, that the saving now of a few millions may cost France before long much blood and much money.

"And be assured above all, Sire, that the necessary preparations for the first campaign alone will cost you more than all the aid they ask you for to-day, and that the miserable economy of two or three millions will certainly cause you to lose more than three hundred millions in the next two years.

"If it be said that we shall not be able to help the Americans without offending England and without bringing down upon our-

selves the very storm which I wish to exorcise, I reply that we shall run no such risk if we follow the plan which I have so often proposed, to aid the Americans secretly without compromising ourselves, imposing upon them as the first condition that they shall never send any of their prizes into our ports, and that they shall commit no act likely to disclose the assistance which they would be sure to lose instantly upon the first indiscretion on the part of the Congress. And if Your Majesty has not at hand a more skilful man to employ in this service, I will undertake it; and I answer for the treaty without allowing anybody to be compromised, believing that my zeal will better make up for my lack of skill than another's skill could make good the loss of my zeal.

"Your Majesty will readily see that the success of this plan depends wholly upon rapidity and secrecy; but one thing which has an extremely important bearing upon both these is, if possible, to send off to London Lord Stormont, who, by the advantage of his connections in France, is in a position to inform, and does daily inform, the English Government of everything that is said, and every question that is discussed, in Your Majesty's Council.

"This is very extraordinary, but it is true. The occasion of the recall of M. de Guines is most favorable to us.[1]

"England insists absolutely upon having an Ambassador. If Your Majesty were in no hurry to appoint a successor to M. de Guines, but were to send to England a chargé-d'affaires or a minister of acknowledged ability, Lord Stormont would immediately be recalled, and it would take a long time for any minister sent here in the place of that Ambassador to make such connections as would enable him to injure us as much as Lord Stormont is now doing. Once the crisis is over, the most insignificant, or the most distinguished, of our noblemen might be sent without risk as Ambassador to London; the business would either have been accomplished or it would have failed, and everything else would be of minor importance.

"Your Majesty may judge from these statements whether my zeal is as wise as it is ardent and pure.

"But if my august master, forgetful of the dangers to which a single word escaping from his lips might subject a faithful servant who recognizes and serves only him, should allow it to be known that he obtains his secret information through me, scarcely any power could then save me from ruin; so great is the influence, Sire, of the cabals and the intrigues in the midst of your Court,

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[1] Vide *supra* as to Lord Stormont's recall.

which aim to cripple and defeat the most important undertakings. Your Majesty knows better than any one that secrecy is the soul of business, and that in politics a project once disclosed is a project doomed to failure.

"Ever since I have entered your service, Sire, I have never asked a favor from you, and I never shall ask for anything. Make it impossible, O my master, for others to deprive me of the power to labor to serve you, and my whole existence shall be consecrated to you.

"CARON DE BEAUMARCHAIS."

Louis XVI. was driven as with a lash into consent to the plans of his Cabinet and to its policy toward England. Whichever way he turned, the door was shut and there was no escape for him; he was threatened with war, cruel and relentless, no matter what his peaceful intentions were, no matter what his political conduct might be. If he remained neutral between England and the Colonies, he should still have to fight just as if he had openly taken part in the struggle; and he should be attacked in any event, whether England won or lost in America. Unable to judge for himself through lack of experience, the King was overborne by the burden of government which he had assumed with fear upon his accession to the throne, and which he now carried with many misgivings as to the direction in which he should turn his steps; and, surrounded as he was by counsellors who united in representing to him that the safety of France was involved in the American war, he did not dare to reject their advice, although Turgot had strongly protested.

That it would be time enough for France to act when she should see some distinct sign of hostility against her on the part of Great Britain escaped the attention of his wavering mind, and he accepted as truth the sophisms and the inconsistencies of the "Considérations" and of "La Paix ou la Guerre."

Possibly it was natural for him to do this; he had no sources of information by which he could obtain other

reports to test these arguments, or upon which to base a theory of his own in connection with them, even if he had been a statesman capable of using such materials when he had them to his hand. He did not discern, or was not warned by, the deliberate self-contradiction with which Beaumarchais in one sentence presented the American Colonies as ready to offer to all the nations of the world the same price of help that they first offered secretly to France, if she should decline to aid them, and in another declared that they could look to France alone for the assistance they needed, and that if she failed them they would be driven to submit to the mother-country. The King appears not to have reflected that, in any event, France was in no wise responsible for the American Revolution, and that she was under no obligation to help the Colonists against the King of England, with whom he was at peace; or that the proposition was monstrous that the Colonies, angered at France, should make peace with England in vengeance upon her, and upon the condition of being allowed to seize the French colonies in the West Indies. Equally outrageous was the supposed threat of the Americans to send their prizes into French ports in order to commit France either to help them or to reject them; for, as they had no possible claim upon France, such a threat must have been, in view of her acknowledged treaty obligations, as idle as it was presumptuous.

Besides, all these specious arguments as to the danger of war might perfectly well have been inverted upon the same premises and presented with equal reason upon the other side. Thus, France would escape war with certainty, whatever might be the outcome of the American Revolution; for if England subdued the Colonies it would only be after enormous expenditure both in men and in money, by which she would have been so far exhausted that it would require all her remaining strength to govern them; and, more than that, as she would then have recovered

her possessions, she would have no ambition to go to war again to despoil her neighbors of property to which she had no claim. If, on the other hand, England lost her American Colonies, she must have been crippled to that extent, and in her weakened condition she would not have been able to attack France; but, if she did so, France had the Family Compact to rely upon, which enabled her at once, in such a case, to join her own forces with those of Spain, and thus place herself beyond the danger of conquest.

It is fortunate for the United States of America that the King pursued at that moment the course he did; for the assistance of France in our Revolution was of inestimable value to us, which no American should ever forget nor can ever depreciate; because there is every reason to believe that if it had not been for the timely intervention of France the Colonies must finally have been overcome by the superior force of Great Britain. Yet the idea is irresistible that if the event had occurred at a time when the French throne was occupied by an experienced statesman, either the American Colonies would have had to do without the aid of France, or the reasons for her participation in the struggle must have been very different from those offered, as we have just seen, to King Louis XVI.; for it is hard to conceive one of the great monarchs who have made the history of France carried along against his inclination by the sort of argument presented in the "Considérations" of the Comte de Vergennes, or that set forth in M. de Beaumarchais's memoir, "La Paix ou la Guerre."

The truth is that Beaumarchais knew, and the Cabinet knew, that they were then intriguing against England with the Colonies, and that the French Government was already inviting war by its acts of encouragement toward the revolted subjects of King George. Their conduct was perfectly consistent, because their definite purpose was war,

and they never wavered from the course which ultimately led them into it; but when they made their addresses to the King they did not tell him plainly what they must have admitted to themselves, that their motive was not so much the love of the French West Indies, or the fear of losing them, as it was the hatred of England and the hope that by taking advantage of the American Revolution they might cripple her influence and reduce her to the condition of a second-rate Power.

The person referred to by Beaumarchais in his memoir to the King as Mr. L., whose full name M. de Vergennes would disclose to his Majesty, was Arthur Lee, of Virginia. He was studying law in London when Dr. Franklin had been there as the representative of the Colonies a short time before; and upon Franklin's return to America he had intrusted to Lee the task of negotiating for arms and munitions of war in the English ports as well as in France. In this connection Beaumarchais had fallen in with him almost immediately upon his arrival in England as the secret agent of the French Cabinet. Mr. Lee's solicitations of aid from France were already becoming extremely urgent to Beaumarchais, and he had offered through that gentleman to go to Paris and present the case to the ministry himself,—an offer which was immediately declined, however, by M. de Vergennes, because of the attention such a visit would have been sure to attract from the British Embassy, and its likelihood to lead to complications with England. His requests were conveyed to the Government through the correspondence of Beaumarchais, and by the latter also, in a more or less exaggerated form, directly to the King, as we have seen. The statement made upon the authority of Mr. Lee, that two official agents had already been sent upon the same mission to Madrid, and that they had received very satisfactory replies from the Spanish Government, aroused in M. de Vergennes feelings of disappointment and alarm lest so

unexpected and undesirable an occurrence should forestall his own purpose and disarrange the plans he had already made for approaching the Spanish Court, and he communicated immediately with the Marqués de Grimaldi, at Madrid, to learn whether it were true, and, if so, to what extent the negotiation had proceeded between the Court of Carlos III. and the Americans. M. de Grimaldi answered, on the 14th of March,[1] "Nobody has applied to us to furnish aid to the revolted Colonies; consequently it is not a fact that we have given them aid; we have not even had occasion to consider what we should do;" which satisfied the French Secretary of State, who wrote at once to Beaumarchais that the statement was untrue. Whether Mr. Lee was deceived or not into believing what he had asserted, is somewhat doubtful from the correspondence; M. Doniol thinks that in this case he drew from his imagination;[2] although Beaumarchais wrote from London, after telling Lee of the denial of the Spanish Court, that "the man was rather stupefied than astonished" at hearing this news, and that "he cannot imagine how the error could have occurred."[3]

The King's assent having thus been obtained, or to such an extent, at least, as to admit of the further development of the Comte de Vergennes's project in regard to the Colonies, Beaumarchais returned to London, where we find him in April, 1776, intriguing with Arthur Lee and other friends of America, establishing relations with all kinds of people willing to aid in forwarding supplies to the Colonists, especially arms and other munitions of war, and writing to the Secretary of State the most earnest appeals in behalf of their cause and for the open declaration of amity and common interest with them by France. As Beaumarchais had attracted the suspicion of the Foreign

[1] Espagne, t. 579, No. 114: Doniol, La Participation de la France, i. 370.
[2] La Participation de la France, i. 370.
[3] Angleterre, t. 515, No. 36: Doniol, La Participation de la France, i. 413.

Office in London upon his former visit, he took the precaution in returning there now of providing himself with at least a show of occupation to account for his movements, and for that purpose he had obtained from M. de Sartine, the Secretary of the Navy, a commission which authorized him to buy for the Government piasters of Portuguese coinage, to be used in the French West India Islands; which proved, indeed, a wise step, because he was upon one occasion closely questioned by Lord Rochford, to whom he showed his commission, and he learned subsequently that the English Government had made inquiries about him from some of the bankers at the Exchange with whom he had been clever enough to open some real transactions upon the subject of piasters, although that coin had been out of circulation in England for several years.

The British Government long suspected the secret traffic that was being carried on between France and the Colonies, and events were now progressing so rapidly that of necessity it could not be a great while before the hostility of the French Cabinet must be either discovered or openly avowed. A vessel called the Dickinson, which had cleared from Philadelphia for Nantes, was taken into the port of Bristol by the captain, an Englishman, who felt it his duty to deliver up his ship rather than to help the enemies of the Government; and upon examination of its papers it was found that the cargo was consigned to the house of Montaudoin Frères & Cie., of Nantes, to be sold by them in exchange for a return cargo of munitions of war. The British Government immediately called the attention of the French Cabinet to this incident, without forcing an open rupture, and a long correspondence followed, in which the French disavowed any acquaintance with the transaction; though the moment had come when dissimulation of that character was scarcely expected any longer to deceive.

The house of Montaudoin Frères were merchants, at Nantes, with whom Dr. Franklin had opened negotiations, two years before, as agents through whom to send forward such arms and equipments as he might be able to obtain in France for the Americans, either by consent of the Government or under its connivance at his schemes. One of the members of the family of Montaudoin was a correspondent of the Royal Academy of Sciences,—which circumstance, no doubt, was instrumental in leading to his acquaintance with Dr. Franklin. Another intermediary employed by Franklin was a physician of Paris, called Dr. Barbeu-Dubourg, to whom the great American appears to have had a strong attachment, and whom he called his "dear good friend." This Dr. Dubourg dealt directly with the manufacturers, made the contracts with them, and bought the cargoes, which were then shipped to Nantes and forwarded by the "Montaudoin Frères" to their destination in America. Since the year 1775 the shipments had continued with great activity, under the connivance of high authority; but latterly the house of Montaudoin had very much enlarged their trade under the actual protection of the ministry; for M. de Vergennes had adopted the machinery that had been formerly employed by Dr. Franklin, and was using it as a part of his plan against Great Britain by strengthening the actual forces and maintaining the courage of the "insurgents." The Montaudoins knew, of course, although the connection was not avowed, what strong hand it was which not only enabled them to continue their traffic with America, but even assured it to them and permitted them greatly to increase its volume, in spite of protests from the British Embassy which flowed in a continuous stream of complaint, always turned aside by evasive replies and ingeniously polite disavowals from the Secretary of State.

Beaumarchais struck this note in England, in replying

to a demand of Lord Rochford that the Cabinet should issue orders against this trade in the French ports, and that the merchants of Nantes should be punished for the part they had taken in it. "Why, my lord," said he, "upon what ground should our Government find fault with the merchants of Nantes? Are we at war with any one? On the contrary, in our present state of peace are not our ports open to all the traders of the world? Before calling upon France, my lord, to explain the negotiations at Nantes, we should have to put a rather extraordinary preliminary question, which is this: 'Has England the right to restrict our trade on account of a purely personal quarrel in which we neither are, nor wish to be, concerned?' And what treaties oblige us to open or to close our ports to merchant-ships according to the will of the British people?" If England thought the Americans were rebels, he continued, she was right in fighting them wherever she encountered them, always out of France, of course; she might run them down at sea, she might capture them and destroy them; "pardieu, my lord," that was nothing to France; but to ask that France should interfere with her own merchants who were carrying on their traffic with people at peace with the country, whether that people were to be considered the subjects of England or whether they were a free and independent nation, and to restrain French traders from having natural and proper intercourse with them,—the idea was too much; in speaking of it Beaumarchais became "rouge de colère."

The clever Frenchman could write good plays, and he could act as well when it was necessary to do so; in this case he evidently felt that he was acting a comedy, in which possibly he did not even expect to be taken too seriously, although he went into it with all his ingenuity and wit; but he argued his case with so much assumed earnestness that Lord Rochford either believed him or pretended to believe him, and Beaumarchais wrote to

Paris, "Cette déclaration nous a tout-à-fait raccommodés, le Lord et moi."[1]

The French Cabinet was now at a point where, having decided that its policy was definitively to aid the Americans, the next step to be taken was to advance beyond the stage of mere connivance into the limit of actual effective support. This step was immediately taken, in the following letter from M. de Vergennes to the King, dated 2d May, 1776. It is the first official act of France in her participation in the American War:

"SIRE,—I have the honor to lay at Your Majesty's feet the document which will authorize me to furnish a million of livres for the use of the English colonies, if you deign to affix to it your 'approuvé.' I join with it also, Sire, the reply which I propose to make to the Sr. de Beaumarchais. If Your Majesty approves of this, I beg of you to return it to me immediately. It will be sent without being written in my hand or that of any of my clerks or my secretary. I shall use for this purpose the handwriting of my son, which cannot be recognized, for whose discretion I can answer affirmatively, although he is only in his fifteenth year.

"Since it is important that this transaction should not be discovered, or at least imputed to the Government, I intend, if Your Majesty will allow me, to send for the Sr. Montaudoin. The pretext I shall give will be to call him to account for his correspondence with the Americans, but the real purpose is to employ him in forwarding to them the moneys which Your Majesty is pleased to grant them; and I shall charge him, at the same time, to take all the precautions which he would take if he were making the advance upon his own account. Upon this I take the further liberty most humbly to ask for the instructions of Your Majesty. This done, I shall write to the Marquis de Grimaldi, I shall explain our transactions to him in detail, and I shall ask him to duplicate it."[2]

The King gave his approval to this proposition, and the Secretary of State wrote, on the following day, the 3d of

[1] Beaumarchais to the Comte de Vergennes, 12th April, 1776, Angleterre, t. 515, No. 76: Doniol, La Participation de la France, i. 407.

[2] Archives Nationales, K 164, No. 3, année 1776: Doniol, La Participation de la France, i. 372.

May, to the Marqués de Grimaldi, the chief minister of Carlos III. of Spain, informing him that France had decided now to take decisive action in regard to America, but that, of course, whatever were done must be done secretly, in order not to alarm Great Britain and endanger the continuance of peace:

"As our two august masters do not wish to come into collision with the King of England, with whom they desire to maintain peace and that sort of intercourse which is possible with a nation to whom nothing is sacred but its momentary interests, we should depart from our object and expose ourselves too openly if we furnished the insurgents with arms, with powder, and with other munitions of war, from our own magazines. But, since they will have no trouble in obtaining these things through the avenues of trade, if they are able to pay for them, the King prefers to supply them the means to giving them anything in kind. Therefore His Majesty has decided to advance to them, as a loan, one million of our livres. The Government will not appear in this matter in any way, but the business will be transacted by a trading company managed by a merchant in one of our seaboard towns, who will demand security, not indeed of much value as an obligation, but sufficient to give color to the reasonable enterprise of a merchant striving to win for himself the largest portion of the commissions in American commerce as soon as the Colonial trade shall be thrown open by the declaration of their independence. We hope, sir, that this unexpected aid, coming to them at a time when perhaps the bravest among them are shaken by the arrival of the enormous forces that England is sending out against them, may have the effect of encouraging them, and may make them more tenacious of the resolution they appear to have adopted not to submit to the yoke. These people are sagacious enough to perceive that aid of this description cannot have come from any ordinary hand. . . . Your Excellency has already intimated to us that The Catholic King would willingly join in any expenses that we might incur in sending aid to the Americans. The King could not consent that the King his uncle should contribute toward the million which he intends to devote to this purpose; but, if His Catholic Majesty were himself inclined to treat them with liberality, and if he thought that our means of forwarding a present to its destination are less likely to arouse suspicion than those which he might obtain in his own realm, Your Excellency will

find me at your service in any matter which it may please the King, your master, to decide upon.[1]

In the mean time, upon information received from London that the English Government had ordered its vessels of war to cruise in the Channel and out to sea in order to intercept American ships seeking the ports of France or Spain, instructions were given to the French squadron of evolution to hold itself between Capes La Hague and Finisterre, instead of sailing to the southward as it would otherwise have done to carry out its manœuvres, so that by this means the English might be kept farther off the coast and ships from the Colonies might have a better chance to run in; and M. de Vergennes sent a request to the Spanish ministry that the King should also send his vessels to cruise for the same purpose between Ferrol and Cadiz, "acts merely of additional precaution," as it was announced, which were intended only to protect the dignity of the two Crowns and to assure their subjects in the enjoyment of their rights.

The Cabinet denied any hostile purpose in this toward England, but reiterated the right of American ships to trade with France; and M. de Vergennes defended that position by asserting that, while the King had issued a prohibition in all the French ports as to furnishing the Colonists with munitions of war, yet in regard to fire-arms and powder, while they might be considered as contraband articles in Great Britain, they were articles of trade in France and nothing more. The Secretary of State used every possible color of excuse under which the Cabinet might still permit the "commerce déguisé" to be carried on with the Colonies and yet not openly offend England; for, he said, "Let us not turn the attention of the English from their own matters in North America; this is certainly the least that we can do for them in return

[1] Espagne, t. 580, No. 70: Doniol, La Participation de la France, i. 375–6.

for the generous care they have taken to do themselves all the injury that we could possibly wish." [1]

Still following the current which was drifting them into war, the French Government issued orders in April, with the approval of the King, that the naval forces should be put in readiness to answer any call that might be made upon them, and that, while four frigates and three corvettes should be sent into American waters, a fleet of twelve vessels of the line, with the corresponding number of frigates, should be held ready in the port of Brest, with eight vessels of the line and the accompanying frigates to be kept in Toulon ready for immediate service in case of the outbreak of hostilities and the possible blockade of Brest. Armaments so important as these very naturally attracted the attention of the British Government, who immediately addressed inquiries to Versailles in regard to them; the British representative went personally to see M. de Vergennes, although, with proper discretion, he made no direct assertion of the right of his Government to demand an explanation. M. de Vergennes had no intention of allowing himself to be caught without an answer to inquiries which he naturally expected, and he was ready upon this occasion, as he always was, to assert the justice of the step which had been taken by the King's order, and the innocence of the motive which actuated his Cabinet; always ingenious in devising an evasive excuse, his reply in this case was particularly so, in shifting the burden of responsibility from his own shoulders to those of the British Government, who might, as he said, render these preparations on the part of France entirely harmless by maintaining peace and strictly prohibiting any of its officers from making a wanton attack upon France. He asserted that the arming of these ships was undertaken only because the French Cabinet was afraid

[1] Comte de Vergennes to M. Garnier, 11 May, 1776, Angleterre, t. 516, No. 30: Doniol, La Participation de la France, i. 465.

that some English commander might break away from all control and make war against France in spite of his Government, and that in such an event France ought to be ready.

However improbable it may seem that a statement of this kind could have been seriously made by one statesman to another, and however unlikely to invite the least faith or confidence in explanation of the motives of a Government bearing the relations to another that France bore at this time to England, yet it is what the Comte de Vergennes actually said to the British minister, and what he afterward referred to as thoroughly justifiable. "For," said he, "my reply was frank and honest; I reassured him in regard to the armaments; I renewed the declaration of the King's intention, whose sincere desire is to maintain the peace and good understanding which now subsist between the two Crowns; though I added that while we have entire confidence in the assurances of reciprocity given us by his British Majesty, yet, as we know that he may be carried forward against his will, and that some of his subalterns may, perhaps, when he least expects it, make engagements which it may not be in his power to break, the recollection of what happened upon a former occasion makes us more vigilant to hold ourselves so that we may not be attacked unexpectedly, and that this is the cause of the activity which may have been noticed in our seaports, but which it is in the power of England to make unfruitful, because upon her conduct will depend everything."[1]

The boldness of this statement made by the usually cautious minister suggests the feeling of almost recklessness with which the French Cabinet now regarded the likelihood of war with England; for no one could certainly care very much what the effect would be of his

[1] Comte de Vergennes to Marquis d'Ossun, 14 May, 1776, Espagne, t. 580, No. 95 : Doniol, La Participation de la France, i. 465.

words who should openly declare to a king like George III. that France was arming because she was suspicious of the movements of some of his subjects, whose actions she knew he could not always control, but for which he might have to be held responsible in open war before long; and, in fact, M. de Vergennes really cared less, because he thought that England was growing weak enough to be disregarded and France strong enough to avow its true attitude toward the Colonies.

No doubt it left the British Cabinet free to take this as an indignity or not, and it marked the advanced attitude of France at this time; there was, indeed, but one step from that point to the tone of defiance with which M. de Vergennes declared to the chargé-d'affaires at London, in reply to some rather menacing comments made in England upon the presence in Paris of Silas Deane, that certainly the English Cabinet must know "that the King is master in his own house; he has no intention of accounting to anybody for the foreigners whom he may see fit to admit into his kingdom, and His Majesty is doing now all that Great Britain could ask him to do as an act of grace, when he declines to receive openly a representative of the English Colonies."[1] The truth is that the Comte de Vergennes thought the moment was then very near when he should be ready to declare war.

In the mean time, King Carlos III. and his minister, the Marqués de Grimaldi, had been brought by a long course of argument and persuasion to share to a certain degree, at least, the views of the French Cabinet in regard to the encouragement of the American Colonies, sufficiently, indeed, to induce them to unite with France in making the proposed loan of two millions of livres; although they arrived at that conclusion by a different course of reasoning, and were impelled by different mo-

[1] Comte de Vergennes to M. Garnier, 31st August, 1776, Angleterre, t. 517, No. 156: Doniol, La Participation de la France, i. 583.

tives, from those of M. de Vergennes and his colleagues. The chief interest of Spain lay in her hostility to Portugal, with whom her relations had been strained to a dangerous tension by recent collisions between their respective forces in South America and by the irritating policy of M. de Pombal, which, as has been already intimated, there was good reason to suspect was secretly fomented by Great Britain. This was followed by still greater distrust of and enmity toward England, which had become extremely acute at the moment when the French ministry was discussing the question of its policy and the likelihood of an attack upon the West Indies, as set forth in the arguments of the Comte de Vergennes in his "Considérations," a copy of which had been duly communicated to Madrid.

It is very probable that this view of the situation was emphasized by the despatches of the Conde de Aranda, Spanish Ambassador at Versailles, whose residence in France brought him into constant communication with the Secretary of State during the period when the subject of war with England was being agitated, and, as it was of considerable importance that he should be made to reflect the sentiments with which it was intended to influence his country toward an alliance with France in an aggressive war against Great Britain when the favorable moment should arrive, it is perhaps reasonable to believe that he had in a measure entered into the spirit of those about him. At all events, the arguments of the Comte de Vergennes were duly considered by the Cabinet of Madrid in the presence of the King, before whom the subject of the American war was fully discussed and the danger from an attack upon the Spanish West Indies carefully investigated, with proper attention to the statement that war was inevitable whichever way the troubles between England and her Colonists should eventuate, and that the only hope of safety was to be found in the joint action of the

two Crowns, by which the coming attack might be anticipated.

The Spanish Government accepted the view that war was imminent and that danger was to be feared from England in consequence of her present troubles, but their conclusion led them to an unexpected result and one most unacceptable to M. de Vergennes: they decided not to make war upon England, but to attack Portugal and to annex it to Spain. The opportunity was too tempting both to the ministry and to the nation; the people loudly demanded the conquest of that kingdom, which they felt ought to belong to the Spanish dominion in order that its boundaries should include the whole Peninsula. While the King was willing to gratify his subjects and at the same time to redress the personal grievances under which he was smarting, the Marqués de Grimaldi, a foreign favorite, unpopular at the Court and hated by the people, who sustained himself in the ministry with difficulty under protection of the King, hoped to employ the glory of this conquest to the advantage of his administration and by it to win his way to the heart of the nation which he had never been able to reach. He sent a formal reply to the French ministry, in which he proposed that Louis XVI. should join with Spain by furnishing twenty or thirty thousand men in the immediate conquest of Portugal, and that, in return for the risks and expenditures of that undertaking, France should indemnify herself by seizing Brazil, in which she should be strengthened by the assistance of Spain.[1]

This was not what had been sought by France; indeed, it gave rise to great disappointment and discomfort in the Cabinet; for, aside from the fact that France had no interest in Brazil and did not wish to occupy that country, the idea that Spain should add to her possessions

[1] M. de Grimaldi to the Conde de Aranda, 18th October, 1775, Espagne, t. 578, No. 31: Doniol, La Participation de la France, i. 305.

in Europe was not an agreeable one; but, above all, the proposition must be rejected because it would divert the attention of England from America to the affairs of the Continent; it would probably result in a European war, and would be fatal to the plans of M. de Vergennes in America.

In a situation, therefore, which was intensely embarrassing, the French Secretary of State found himself obliged to reply to this proposal which was based upon the acceptance of his own suggestions, and to perform the extremely delicate operation of modifying his own position without wounding the pride of the Spanish monarch, whilst he retained his ground sufficiently to enable him still to have a basis for further negotiations in the development of his policy, from which he did not wish to recede. Whilst his reply was very like an effort to parry a blow delivered from one's own side, it was most skilfully prepared, and it effected the purpose which for the moment he had in view: it evaded participation in the conquest of Portugal and left undisturbed the cordial relations with Spain.[1]

A voluminous correspondence between the two countries immediately followed, which for the purpose of this narrative it is necessary only to mention, during the whole of which M. de Vergennes was cautiously returning to the point he had left; and, after six months of patience and industry, he certainly achieved a diplomatic triumph when he was able to write his despatch of the 3d of May, 1776, to M. de Grimaldi proposing that Spain should advance to the American Colonies a loan of a million of livres. It is true that he was never able to overcome entirely the obstacle to the complete unity of the two Crowns presented by the radical divergence of the purposes which they had in view; for, while he succeeded in bringing Spain into

[1] Comte de Vergennes to M. de Aranda, 25th November, 1775, Espagne, t. 578, No. 104: Doniol, La Participation de la France, i. 306.

an attitude of hostility toward England, it was only through the avenue of conflict with Portugal, and not through the desire for revenge for past injury which was the motive power in France. Yet, in spite of this, he succeeded in obtaining the tacit recognition by Spain of the American Colonies, and the advance to them which he sought. The Spanish letter of credit was sent to the Conde de Aranda enclosed in the following letter from M. de Grimaldi, dated the 27th of June, 1776, at Madrid, in which, after acknowledging the receipt of a letter in which M. de Aranda had informed the minister of the relief which M. de Vergennes proposed to send to the revolted Colonies, M. de Grimaldi continued:

"That wise minister attains by this means the politic result of contributing to weaken both the English in order to destroy them and the Colonists in order to bring them to reason the moment they become independent.

"His Majesty applauds these measures of the Court of France, which he regards as quite in accord with the views that France and Spain should always hold; and, as this interest is a common one between the two monarchies, the King feels that the step which is now about to be taken toward sustaining the insurgents in their state of resistance should be common also. Therefore the King directs me to send you the enclosed letter of credit for one million livres tournois, to be employed for the same purpose. We have not the means for carrying this out directly and with sufficient secrecy, but Your Excellency will agree with the Comte de Vergennes as to the kind of aid to which it will be best to devote this sum and as to the means by which it may reach its destination, either by following the channel already opened by France, or by some other shorter one, as Your Excellency and M. de Vergennes shall decide to be most suitable.

"In order to avoid comment and not to excite suspicion of any kind, I have let it be understood at the Treasury that this sum is intended for a purchase which Your Excellency is directed to make by order of the King, and I have written this despatch entirely with my own hand, in order that the secret may not be disclosed to anybody."[1]

[1] Espagne, t. 580, No. 193; Doniol, La Participation de la France, i. 485.

CHAPTER V.

BEGINNING OF DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS BETWEEN FRANCE AND THE UNITED STATES.

WHILST these events were taking place, Silas Deane, the American Commissioner appointed by the Committee of Secret Correspondence, had arrived in France. Having left America in March, 1776, and gone by way of Bermuda and Spain, in order to escape detection and arrest by the British cruisers, he had arrived in June at Bordeaux, where he spent a week in making negotiations which should enable him to carry out the purpose of his mission; and, after stopping for a day, *en route*, at Angoulême to visit the establishments where at that time the greater part of the cannon used in France were made, he reached Paris on the 5th of July. The instructions given to Mr. Deane by the Committee of Secret Correspondence, on the 3d of March, at Philadelphia, prepared, no doubt, by Dr. Franklin, directed him to assume the character, upon his arrival in France, of a merchant engaged in providing goods for the Indian trade, since it was not probable that the Court of France would choose to have it known that an agent from the Colonies was in that country;[1] also that in Paris it would scarcely be necessary for him "to pretend any other business than the gratifying of that curiosity which draws numbers thither yearly merely to see so famous a city."

He had letters to M. Leray de Chaumont, at the Louvre, Intendant for supplying the French army with clothing, etc., and to Dr. Barbeu-Dubourg, the latter of whom was

[1] Diplomatic Correspondence, Wharton, ii. 78.

especially recommended to him as "a man prudent, faithful, secret, intelligent in affairs, and capable of giving you very sage advice." And, while his conversation with these gentlemen might be expected to furnish him "a good opportunity of acquiring Parisian French," Dr. Dubourg would also aid him in presenting himself to M. de Vergennes, with whom he was instructed to seek an audience as soon after his arrival as he could do so, "acquainting him that he was in France upon business of the American Congress in the character of a merchant having something to communicate to him that might be mutually beneficial to France and the North American Colonies." He was further to say to M. de Vergennes that the Congress was unable to obtain through the ordinary avenues of commerce the quantity of arms and ammunition needed by the Colonies for their defence, and that, having determined to apply to some European Power for a supply, he had been sent out with authority to apply first to France, because of the opinion that if the Colonies should come to a total separation from Great Britain, France would be looked upon as the Power whose friendship it would be fittest for them to obtain and to cultivate; and that thereupon he should ask of M. de Vergennes, on behalf of the Colonies, clothing and arms for twenty-five thousand men, with a suitable quantity of ammunition and one hundred field-pieces.

When Mr. Deane arrived in France he found that, while Dr. Dubourg had been and was still very energetic and faithful in the cause of America, circumstances had somewhat changed since Dr. Franklin had gone home. M. de Vergennes had employed Dr. Dubourg and his connections to a certain extent until the fixed determination was reached by the ministry that France should aid the Colonies systematically, when it became necessary that the Cabinet should employ its own machinery with its own system of communication; and, in order that this should

be established upon a basis which would secure efficient service, preserve the secrecy of its actions, and centralize the whole business of credits, purchases, agreements, and shipments, it was obliged to have its own man in charge. That man was Beaumarchais. It was not very long before Mr. Deane discovered that, whilst he was likely to obtain in France all the munitions and supplies that he was authorized to contract for, the influence at Court of Dr. Dubourg and his people had been superseded by that of Beaumarchais. He quickly decided, therefore, that in order to succeed he must deal with him, because in dealing with Beaumarchais he would be practically dealing with the Government. In the mean time, however, he persuaded Dr. Dubourg to write to the Comte de Vergennes and beg for an interview upon a certain day, upon which he went to Versailles with him; and, although M. Dubourg's letter had not been received by the Secretary of State, that gentleman gave them immediate reception, on the 17th of July, 1776.

The Comte de Vergennes knew already that Mr. Deane was in Paris, and he had his own reasons for receiving him. This audience was the first occasion upon which the American people treated as an independent nation with a foreign Power.

The Comte de Vergennes did not speak English, but the interview was conducted by his chief secretary, M. Gérard, who understood it and spoke it well; and by this means, Mr. Deane said,[1]—

"I had an opportunity of conversing freely with him on the subject of my commission for two hours, and was attentively and favorably heard by him, and was asked many questions, which shows that the American disputes had been, and still were, a principal object of attention. I pursued nearly the line marked out by my instructions, stating the importance of the American com-

[1] Silas Deane to the Committee of Secret Correspondence, 18th August, 1776: Diplomatic Correspondence, Wharton, ii. 112.

merce, and the advantages Great Britain had received from a monopoly of it. That, all intercourse ceasing between the two countries, the Colonies had considered where they might dispose of that produce, which they necessarily had so large a surplus of, and receive for their raw or first materials the various manufactures they wanted. That they first turned their eyes on France, as the best country in Europe for them to be connected with in commerce. That I was purchasing a large quantity of manufactures, for which I expected to pay the money, and that I should want a quantity of military stores, for which remittances would be made. That I doubted not the Colonies had before this declared independency, and that I should soon receive instructions, in consequence, more full and explicit; that in the mean time they were very anxious to know how such a declaration would be received by the Powers in Europe, particularly by France, and whether, in such a case, an ambassador would be received from them, etc.?

"To which he replied that the importance of the American commerce was well known, and that no country could so well supply the Colonies, and in turn receive their produce, as France; it was, therefore, the interest of both to have the most free and uninterrupted intercourse, for which reason the Court had ordered their ports to be kept open and equally free to America as to Britain. That, considering the good understanding between the two Courts of Versailles and London, they could not *openly* encourage the shipping of warlike stores, but no obstruction of any kind would be given; if there should, as the custom-houses were not fully in their secrets in this matter, such obstructions should be removed on the first application. That I must consider myself perfectly free to carry on any kind of commerce in the kingdom which any subject of any other State in the world might, as the Court had resolved their ports should be equally free to both parties. That I was under his immediate protection, and should I meet with any difficulty, either from their police, with the rules of which he supposed me unacquainted, or from any other quarter, I had but to apply to him and everything should be settled. That as to independency, it was an event in the womb of time, and it would be highly improper for him to say anything on that subject until it had actually taken place; meantime, he informed me that the British Ambassador knew of my arrival, and therefore advised me not to associate with Englishmen more than I was from necessity obliged, as he doubted not I should have many spies on my conduct. . . . He then asked me

many questions with respect to the Colonies; but what he seemed most to want to be assured of was their ability to subsist without their fisheries and under the interruption of their commerce. . . . After many questions on this subject, he put this, in which I thought he seemed interested,—whether, if the Colonies declare an independency, they would not differ among themselves? To this I replied that the greatest harmony had as yet subsisted, and that I had no grounds to doubt it in future; that the common danger which first drove them into measures which must end in such a declaration would subsist, and that alone was sufficient to insure their union.

"He then desired me to give his Secretary my address, and said, though he should be glad to see me often, yet, as matters were circumstanced, his house was too public a place, but that I might put the same confidence in his Secretary as in himself, to whom I might apply for advice and direction; but that whenever anything of importance occurred I need but inform him, and he would see me; but on common occasions I must address the Secretary, which would be everyway more convenient, as he understood the English language well, and was a person in whom the greatest confidence could be placed. Having settled the mode of intercourse, I expressed the sense I had of his Excellency's politeness, and the generous protection he had given me, and on parting said, if my commission, or the mode of introducing the subject, were out of the usual course, I must rely on his goodness to make allowances for a new-formed people, in circumstances altogether unprecedented, and for their agent, wholly unacquainted with Courts. To which he replied that the people and their cause were very respectable in the eyes of all disinterested persons, and that the interview had been agreeable."

Whilst Silas Deane was thus with diffidence presenting the interests of his people at the Court of France, the Comte de Vergennes, who was glad of this opportunity to discuss the affairs of America with a person whose opinions might be worthy of consideration through his acquaintance with the country, dexterously led the conversation toward the two subjects which were uppermost in his mind and in regard to which, as we know, he wished to satisfy himself; namely, whether the Colonies would be able to subsist if they were reduced to their own resources,

and whether, when once they were independent of Great Britain, they were likely to weaken themselves by severing into disconnected states, or might be counted upon to act as one united nation,—inquiries to which Mr. Deane gave satisfactory replies; though, whilst they attracted his attention, they did not impress him with their real importance, because he did not suspect—indeed, he could not, from the nature of the case, suspect—how exceedingly near France was at that moment to taking sides with the Americans and assuming an active share in the war.

At all events, M. de Vergennes was encouraged by the information he had obtained in this interview. He saw Mr. Deane again a few days later, and gave that gentleman "fresh assurances of the utmost freedom and protection in their ports and on their coasts," and, as Mr. Deane reported to the Committee of Secret Correspondence, "that, in one word, I might rely on whatever Mons. Beaumarchais should engage in the commercial way of supplies, which, indeed, was all I wished for, as I was on the safe side of the question, viz., on the receiving part."[1] Although this was toward the end of July, it was not as yet known in France that the Colonies had declared their independence; that information did not reach Paris until nearly a month later, in the first half of August, 1776. This much had been accomplished, however, that the United Colonies had directly applied to France first of all foreign nations for assistance, and that they were now carrying out an understanding which had been reached by their representative and the French Government.

There were abundant means at hand for supplying the demands which Mr. Deane was authorized to present; for the arsenals of France contained immense quantities of stores, and, in consequence of an improvement in their fire-arms which had recently been adopted by the Ministry

[1] Diplomatic Correspondence, Wharton, ii. 112.

of War, there were some seventy thousand muskets of the old and heavier pattern lying unused in the magazines, many of them as good as new, with other military stores in proportion. The summer of 1776 was employed by Mr. Deane in negotiating through Beaumarchais for the collecting of such part of this equipment as was required by the Colonies, its purchase from the Government, and its shipment to America; in which matter, as he had the full countenance of the ministry, he received valuable aid from M. Leray de Chaumont, the Intendant, and was enabled through Beaumarchais to deal directly with the Departments of War and the Navy.

The two millions of livres advanced by the Courts of France and Spain to aid the Colonies were given to Beaumarchais, who devised a plan by which all their business in France might be transacted and all their interests protected. He established a fictitious trading house, under the name of Roderique Hortalès et Cie., which purported to be the agent of the Colonies in France, and which was, in fact, the intermediary between the American Congress and the French Government. He wrote to the Committee of Secret Correspondence, on the 18th of August, 1776, announcing that he had established an extensive commercial house, solely for the purpose of serving them in Europe and of supplying them expeditiously and certainly with clothes, linens, powder, ammunition, muskets, cannon, or even gold for the payment of troops, "and in general everything that can be useful for the honorable war in which you are engaged," adding that he had already procured for them two hundred pieces of brass cannon (four-pounders), two hundred thousand pounds of cannon-powder, twenty thousand excellent fusils, some brass mortars, bombs, cannon-balls, bayonets, platines, clothes, linens, etc., for the clothing of the troops, and lead for musket-balls.[1]

[1] Diplomatic Correspondence, Wharton, ii. 129.

He had correspondents in all the ports of France, who were always ready upon the arrival of American vessels to call upon the captains, to perform services for them, to receive their letters and bills of lading and forward them to Hortalès et Cie., who either took the cargo in exchange for arms and munitions of war, or else facilitated the sale and disposal of it otherwise. The articles particularly sought for from America were tobacco, rice, indigo, and wheat or flour,—especially tobacco. The business was transacted entirely in Europe, and it was understood that all risks of loss or seizure were to be borne by the Colonies. In this manner great quantities of materials of war were collected to aid the insurgents and were shipped to America.

All these transactions of Silas Deane in France were immediately reported with tolerable accuracy and minuteness of detail by the agents of the British Government to the Embassy at Paris and to the ministry at home; and, in consequence, the facility of giving evasive answers which M. de Vergennes had developed by frequent usage was severely strained by the protests and representations that followed on the part of England, and there was no longer any doubt that the attitude of France was well understood on the other side of the Channel. M. Garnier, the French chargé-d'affaires in London, sent home a copy of a remarkable document at that time reported to have been prepared upon this subject by Lord Chatham, which, although strongly partisan, and whether entirely authentic or not, illustrates in an interesting manner the feeling in England, where the question was, of course, freely discussed, and shows that the position of the French Cabinet in relation to the Colonies was almost as well understood by English statesmen at the close of the year 1776 as if they had actually been in the counsels of Louis XVI. and his ministers.

M. Garnier reported that Lord Chatham had said "that

he retained the same sentiments which he had always had in regard to America, and of that he had given proof by the Provisional Act which he had presented to the House of Lords. That, relying upon the friendship of Doctor Adington (his physician), he begged him to preserve this writing, in testimony of what he said, in order that in the event of his succumbing to the long illness with which he was afflicted, the doctor should do him the justice to show that he had remained constantly of the same opinion. He added that unless effectual measures were promptly taken to reconcile the Colonies, he was fully convinced that in a few years France would have one foot in England. That at the present moment the policy of France was, very probably, to wait some time longer before declaring war openly, in order to permit England to involve herself still further in the ruinous war which she was waging against herself in America, and to see how far the Americans, secretly encouraged, would be able to offer resistance."[1] This is almost an echo of the language used by the Comte de Vergennes in his despatches to explain the policy of France.

Such was the condition of politics when the news arrived that the American Colonies had declared their independence. For the moment, that very important event excited no especial interest beyond the fact that it was what had been more or less confidently expected. The tone of the Declaration itself, and the enunciation of principles which it contains, were passed over for the most part with the casual notice conceded to an instrument which was regarded merely as marking another incident in the conflict between the mother-country and the Colonists.

The announcement was made to M. de Vergennes on the 13th of August, by the chargé-d'affaires at London, as follows: "General Howe announces that the Congress

[1] M. Garnier to the Comte de Vergennes, 6th December, 1776, Angleterre, t. 517, No. 85 : Doniol, La Participation de la France, i. 504.

has declared the independence of the United Colonies. It is also known that the Congress has formally declared war against Great Britain, and that this declaration is set forth in twenty-three articles in which it explains the causes which have determined it to take this measure. But the Government has not thought it necessary to take notice of this, and in fact I do not see, myself, that this raising of the bucklers is likely to produce any new sensation here."[1] Garnier, the chargé-d'affaires, was a friend of the Colonies; his sympathies were with them in any event that was likely to be of advantage to them; he simply reflected in this despatch the opinions that he heard expressed in England, and he failed to detect any signs of the great change that was to be wrought in the world by that momentous act of the 4th of July.

Not so, however, the Comte de Vergennes. To him it announced his opportunity. It was the opened door to all the hopes of his administration; to the occasion he had sought for years; to the great ambition of his life; to the returning glory of France. He grasped the situation instantly and made up his mind to act. He was convinced by what had now taken place that the Colonists intended to continue the fight. In his reply to Garnier's communication, he remarked that "this declaration of their independence, directly in the face of Lord Howe, did not look very much as if terror were about to take possession of their souls," and before the end of the month he had formally proposed that France and Spain should begin the war.

Having asked the King to appoint a "Committee" of the Cabinet for the purpose of considering the political situation and the measures to be taken in view of the circumstances, he prepared a minute, which, although very long, was written entirely in his own hand,—an

[1] Angleterre, t. 517, No. 116: Doniol, La Participation de la France, i. 561.

indication of the intense interest he took in the subject and the scrupulous care with which he treated it. This statement was to be read to the committee for their opinion, and if it were duly approved was then to be communicated to the Spanish Court. The committee consisted of the same counsellors of the King as had previously deliberated upon the policy of the two Crowns, —namely, M. de Maurepas, M. de Sartine, M. de St.-Germain, and M. de Clugny, the successor of Turgot as Contrôleur-Général. It met on the 31st of August, in the presence of the King, to whom M. de Vergennes read his minute, which was, so far as there is any evidence in the Archives, unanimously approved.

Although this document repeats to some extent the arguments which had been offered on former occasions in treating of the subject of Great Britain in her relations to the American Colonies and her attitude of possible danger toward the two Crowns, it is historically important in its bearing upon our Revolution, because, at a moment when the two monarchies were willing to enter into the contest, it presents a full statement of the case on the part of France.[1]

This was the climax of the Comte de Vergennes's diplomacy between the Courts of Versailles and Madrid. It was a distinct proposition to Spain to make war upon Great Britain by taking advantage of its embarrassment in the North American Colonies. The Conde de Aranda, the Spanish Ambassador, who was in close intimacy and entire accord with the Secretary of State, went to his house on the day when the King's Council met, and received from him there a detailed account of the contents of this memoir; and in the following week, on the 7th of September, he transmitted by courier an official copy of it to the Marqués de Grimaldi, at Madrid. The Spanish

[1] See Appendix A.

Court, thus summoned to decide finally what course it would pursue in so grave a matter, received this communication with some surprise, but gave to it the serious consideration required by a subject which involved a discussion of the whole policy of the Cabinet and an examination of all the material resources of the kingdom. The Spaniards had their own grounds for complaint against England, as we have seen, and these they might stretch to the importance of a *casus belli*, if they saw fit to do so; they still retained the old enmity toward Portugal, and the temptation to capture that kingdom once and for all, and to annex it to Spanish territory, made them all the more inclined to encourage a war which was likely to offer them a chance to satisfy their ambition. Besides this, the resources of Spain were in excellent condition, so that she need fear nothing on that score, even in a war against Great Britain; for, in spite of the unceasing activity with which the Government had during the past year been increasing the navy and strengthening the land forces, which had called for immense expenditures of money, the taxes had not been increased, and the King had declared that it would not be necessary to make new levies then even in case of actual war.

Therefore, after a very careful examination of the proposition of M. de Vergennes, the Spanish Cabinet made a reply, at the end of about a month from the time it had received the despatch, which was, upon the whole, favorable to the plan, and stated clearly the conditions upon which Spain would agree to join in the war; this reply was contained in a letter written by the Spanish Premier, from San Ildefonso, on the 8th of October, 1776, to the Conde de Aranda, at Versailles, to be laid by him before the Court of Louis XVI.

The chief, and by far the most important, condition made by Spain was that it should be allowed at once to invade the kingdom of Portugal, to conquer it, and to

attach it permanently to the Spanish Crown, "for the general satisfaction of the nation" and because it properly "belonged to Spain by right of inheritance." This being agreed to, the Spanish Court was willing to unite with France, to determine when the war should be openly declared, how it should be carried on, and what part should be assigned in it to each of the two monarchies; it conceded that war was inevitable, that it would be just to declare it, that it would be wise to attack England whilst she was engaged with her Colonies, that it might be well to foment a rebellion in Ireland, in which Spain was ready to assist, and, finally, that as soon as France should have shown herself ready to make the attack and to sustain the campaign, Spain would follow; and although, in calculating the results, Spain ran much the greater risk in case of failure, she would adopt whatever measures France considered best to be carried out.[1]

The announcement at Versailles of this decision marks one of those turning-points in the world's progress at which the course of events leads into an unexpected direction and changes the whole narrative of subsequent history from what the promise of it had been but a moment before. The Comte de Vergennes had gained the purpose to which he had devoted such incessant and patient labor, and had won a triumph for his diplomacy with the Court of Spain. If he had continued as everything seemed to promise, the whole history of the American Revolution would likely have been different; the history of Europe at that period would not have been what it is. We should probably have had, at the beginning of the year 1777, the powerful aid of both France and Spain in our struggle for independence, against which Great Britain would have been unable to contend. It is likely that Spain would have taken Por-

[1] M. de Grimaldi to the Conde de Aranda, 8th October, 1776, Espagne, t. 582, No. 21 : Doniol, La Participation de la France, i. 603.

tugal, which nothing could have prevented if she had made a sudden attack upon that kingdom with the superior forces which she then had at command. As a result, it is conceivable that a European war would have followed in which there would have been engaged a number of Powers which continued, as events turned out, for many years afterward to live in peace.

At the very moment, however, when M. de Vergennes was about to stretch out his hand to take advantage of the success he had won at the Spanish Court, news came to him of the defeat upon Long Island. This unexpected announcement dashed his hopes and completely disarranged his plans. It came from M. Garnier, the chargé-d'affaires at London, in a letter dated the 11th of October, which, derived as it was from English sources, and necessarily affected by the exultation with which the victory of General Howe was everywhere received in Great Britain, exaggerated the case far beyond what the circumstances warranted. It represented the Americans as having been overwhelmed by a disaster which had not only broken their resistance, but had brought them hopelessly under the control of the English and was likely to force them to lay down their arms upon the fall of New York, which was predicted as sure to follow very soon.

Although M. Garnier endeavored to offer some morsels of consolation in his letter, derived from the opinions of the Opposition party in England, this news from America was a heavy blow to the Comte de Vergennes, who received it with bitter disappointment. It swept away in an instant all the hopes he had built upon the successful resistance of the Americans to the mother-country; it destroyed the foundations of his policy of immediate war upon England; and it made it impossible for him to use the alliance with Spain, whose consent it had been so hard to obtain, now that he had it ready to his hand. If

the American Colonists were substantially conquered, as the English reports asserted, it was an end to the entire policy of his administration in regard to England. If, on the other hand, they were only temporarily crippled, even that modified his plans very seriously, at least for the present. In either event, he could no longer think of war. With mortification he recognized that, while the international relations between England and France were the same as before, he should now be forced to present them differently, and that out of the same set of circumstances from which yesterday he had drawn the reasons for his glowing appeal to arms he must find arguments to-day for maintaining the peace. The Court was at Fontainebleau, whither he also had gone in attendance upon the King, and it was there that he received from the Spanish Ambassador the answer of Carlos III.

Having broken the seals, he immediately called the attention of Louis XVI. to the document, on the 17th of October, accompanying it with a short note which was entirely free from his former enthusiasm, plainly indicating his change of attitude, and in which he contented himself with a summary discussion of its contents, saying in conclusion that, after all, "there was now no hurry for these matters."[1] On the following day the King signified his accord with this view of his Secretary of State and agreed with him upon the terms of the reply to be sent to the Court of Spain, which terms were communicated at once to the Conde de Aranda, in anticipation of the formal declaration which M. de Vergennes should transmit to his sovereign as soon as it could be drawn up. One week later that document was duly prepared, and in submitting it to the King, on the 26th of October, 1776, for his final approval, M. de Vergennes attached to it the following note, which indicates in a few words, quite as

[1] Archives Nationales, K 164, No. 3, année 1776, No. 16: Doniol, La Participation de la France, i. 618.

well, perhaps, as a much longer explanation would have done, the difference in the attitude of the French Court as it was when it adopted the resolution of the 31st of August in favor of war, and as it had subsequently readjusted itself upon the announcement of General Washington's retreat from Long Island:

"SIRE,—I have the honor to submit to Your Majesty the document which I have prepared in reply to the despatch of the Marquis de Grimaldi to the Comte d'Aranda. I have used as the basis of my argument the views and principles which Your Majesty was pleased to communicate to me in your letter of the 18th inst. I trust, Sire, that I have conformed to your intentions. I have proposed no active measures, and in this I believe that I am not far from the intentions of the Court of Spain, which appear to me to be not so warlike as its Ambassador supposes. This gentleman would have an immediate declaration. But that is now very much less pressing than it might have appeared two months ago; and all that present circumstances seem to demand of the watchfulness of Your Majesty and of that of the Catholic King is to see that the Americans do not succumb for want of means to continue their resistance."[1]

In a word, France had fallen back to the position of secret encouragement and passive indulgence which it had occupied in regard to the Colonies for more than a year. It returned to its connivance at the acts of Colonial agents and the loading of Colonial vessels in French ports; to the régime of Beaumarchais, of Silas Deane, and of dissimulation before Lord Stormont. In this the policy of the Cabinet had not been changed, but the development of its policy was checked and active measures were for the time indefinitely postponed.

The Court of Spain accepted the reasons given for what they were worth, not greatly disappointed, perhaps, at finding an opportunity to avoid a difficulty that was not of its own creation; and, without making serious objec-

[1] Archives Nationales, K 164, No. 3, année 1776, No. 17: Doniol, La Participation de la France, i. 620.

tion to the change, it held itself as notified that for the present, at least, there would be no war. But M. de Vergennes lost ground then which he was not able to recover; he never induced Spain afterward to accept his views as completely as he had done upon this occasion. The administration of the Marqués de Grimaldi had been friendly, even cordial, in its relations to France; and it was no doubt owing to this that M. de Vergennes had succeeded in creating the sentiment at Madrid against Great Britain which he had fomented, as we have seen, until he almost persuaded the Spanish Court that the interests of the two Crowns were identical and could best be advanced by the policy which he had outlined in connection with the American War.

There came now, however, a strong revulsion of feeling, which drove M. de Grimaldi from office and altered definitively the subsequent relations of the monarchies; for the note of the French Secretary of State by which he receded from his position after obtaining the Spanish King's consent to war was received with a storm of indignation in Spain. The strong political party (the Aragoneses) led by the Prince of Asturias seized this occasion to heap indignities upon the Premier, whom they had never liked, and whom they now accused as a foreigner of having exposed the honor of Spain to insult and disgrace; they had reproached him formerly for the failure of the expedition against Algiers, they now upbraided him for the loss of Portugal and for having allowed M. de Vergennes to trifle with the dignity of the Crown. M. de Grimaldi was weary of a position which had to be constantly sustained against these bitter attacks, and he begged the King to allow him to resign. His request was granted, and at the same time the great wish of his life was gratified, when his master appointed him, in November, 1776, his Ambassador at Rome. The new administration was formed under the Premiership of the Conde de Floridablanca, a

Spaniard by birth, by education, and by intensity of patriotism. His impulses were strongly national, as was also his ambition, and, with the example of the Marqués de Grimaldi fresh before him, it was but natural that he should assume a different and a much more independent position in his relations with France.

At the close of the year 1776, and in the early part of 1777, a decided relaxation had taken place, therefore, in the bonds which united the two Crowns upon the subject of Great Britain; the Comte de Vergennes continued in his despatches to assume that they were acting together, but it soon became evident that his influence was broken; and, while the feeling of the Spanish Cabinet toward the American Colonies was one of kindness, as was shown by its friendly treatment of American vessels at this time in the ports of Spain, in spite of the protests of the English agents, there was no disposition to treat directly with the representatives of Congress or to make use of the American Revolution as a pretext for war.

Between England and France the situation was extremely delicate. The language of the Comte de Vergennes had been greatly modified in his despatches to London after the battle of Long Island, and he had repeated to Lord Stormont, at Versailles, the usual assurances of his desire for peace and of good will toward England, yet it was well known in London that he was secretly treating with the Commissioners of the United States and that the French Government was continuing with all possible vigor to strengthen its armament and to increase its land and naval forces. On the other hand, England was increasing the number of her war-ships to such an extent as to cause considerable alarm upon that subject in France. The attitude of the two countries at this time, therefore, although the amicable relations between the Courts continued uninterrupted, was decidedly one of mutual watchfulness and suspicion.

Lord Stormont, who had now returned to France, communicated to the Cabinet of Versailles with triumphant satisfaction the success of the British arms in America, which certainly was as unpalatable as any announcement he could have made that did not directly threaten the welfare of the kingdom; and the reply of M. de Vergennes taxed the resources of diplomatic courtesy to their utmost limit not to be outdone by his wary opponent. It illustrates the French minister's intense anxiety to keep on friendly terms at this period with the English Court. It is, perhaps, all things considered, his masterpiece in dissimulation:

"VERSAILLES, the 21st of December, 1776.

"To M^D. STORMONT. SIR,—I am deeply touched by the attention of Your Excellency in permitting me to share with you the joy you feel at the happy news of the successes of the British arms in Connecticut and in New York. I beg Your Excellency to accept my hearty thanks for this proof of friendship, and my sincere congratulations upon an event so likely to contribute toward the re-establishment of peace in that quarter of the globe. I shall report to the King the communication which Your Excellency has been kind enough to address to me, and I take it upon myself to say that His Majesty will always hear with pleasure of anything that can contribute to the happiness or glory of the King, your master. I have the honor, etc.

"DE VERGENNES."[1]

This letter is interesting, aside from the political events that we have just been discussing, in connection with the history of the Marquis de La Fayette, because it illustrates the sensitive condition of the intercourse between France and Great Britain at the time when that gentleman was planning to set out for America, and the fixed determination of the French Cabinet to allow nothing to occur openly that might disturb the show of cordial

[1] Angleterre, t. 519, No. 106: Doniol, La Participation de la France, ii. 107, note.

understanding, which, superficial and uncertain of duration though it was, had become an important factor in the policy of waiting and watching recently adopted by the Comte de Vergennes. It was only a few months later that La Fayette left Paris to join his vessel at Bordeaux, an event which was noised about at once by the conversation of his intimate friends and was made a subject of notoriety by the opposing measures of his father-in-law. The Duc d'Ayen's angry protests and his appeal to the Government quickly attracted the attention of the English Embassy, both on account of his distinction at the French Court and of the position of La Fayette himself. When the fact was publicly stated that a man of La Fayette's rank and high connection, an officer at the same time in the King's army, was about to proceed to America to join the Colonists in their present struggle, it became necessary for the French Cabinet either to use its authority to forbid his departure, or tacitly to avow, in the face of Great Britain, its assent to and approval of his action. This is why the *lettre-de-cachet* was issued by command of the King for the immediate arrest of La Fayette, with orders to him to proceed to Marseilles; this also is why the Government did not connive at his leaving France, and why the obstacles were thrown in his path against which we have seen him bravely struggling from the time he left Paris until he finally set sail from Los Pasajes.

The affairs of the American Colonies continued, however, to make favorable progress in France under the secret protection of the Government, and the collection and shipment of arms and munitions of war were steadily going on, under the management of Beaumarchais and the general direction of Silas Deane, whose operations were not restricted by the changed attitude of the Comte de Vergennes, except upon occasions when the protests from England became too threatening and it was found

necessary to keep up appearances by a temporary cessation. Congress determined to replace Mr. Deane, as agent of the Colonies, by Commissioners who should be sent to Paris clothed with authority as representatives of the independent nation, authorized to solicit the formal recognition of the King, and to enter into a treaty of commerce with France if that measure could be effected; and on the 26th of September, 1776, it appointed as such Commissioners Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson, and Silas Deane. Mr. Jefferson, who was then in Virginia, declined the appointment, and Arthur Lee was selected, on the 22d of October, to take his place.

Dr. Franklin, the only member of the Commission in America, for Mr. Deane was still in Paris and Mr. Lee in London, made preparations to sail for France immediately, with rare patriotism devoting his wisdom and experience to the service of his country, and facing the hardships of an autumn passage across the Atlantic, although he was at this time seventy-one years of age.

He set out from Philadelphia on the 26th of October, 1776, in the war-vessel The Reprisal, commanded by Captain Wickes, and arrived in Quiberon Bay after a stormy voyage, though what was then a short one, of thirty days, the ship having on her way taken as prizes two British brigantines, which she brought into the French port. After remaining on board four days to recover from the effects of the voyage, which had considerably reduced his strength, Dr. Franklin went ashore at Auray, in Brittany, whence he wrote to Silas Deane, on the 4th of December, to announce his coming and to inform him of the appointment of the Commissioners, requesting him at the same time to notify Mr. Arthur Lee and to ask him to come to Paris to meet them.[1] From Auray he proceeded to Nantes, where he learned for the first time, and

[1] Diplomatic Correspondence, Wharton, ii. 216.

with great satisfaction, of the kind treatment which had been accorded to Mr. Deane in France and of the very promising condition in which the business of the Colonies was at that time in regard to the procuring of arms and equipments for war. But, with due caution, he remained a few days at Nantes before going to Paris, in order to ascertain more fully what the feeling of the French Government might be toward him and the other Commissioners when they should announce themselves in the official capacity which they were authorized to assume, unwilling as he was, on the one hand, to embarrass the ministry by his presence if it were not acceptable, and sensitive, upon the other, lest as representatives of the infant Republic they might meet with a rebuff.

"Our friends in France," he wrote to John Hancock on the 8th of December, "have been a good deal dejected with the gazette accounts of advantages obtained against us by the British troops. I have helped them here to recover their spirits a little, by assuring them that we still face the enemy, and were under no apprehension of their armies being able to complete their junction. . . . Our voyage, though not long, was rough, and I feel myself weakened by it, but I now recover strength daily, and in a few days shall be able to undertake the journey to Paris. I have not yet taken any public character, thinking it prudent first to know whether the Court is ready and willing to receive ministers publicly from Congress, that we may neither embarrass her on the one hand, nor subject ourselves to the hazard of a disgraceful refusal on the other. I have dispatched an express to Mr. Deane, with the letters that I had for him from the Committee, and a copy of our commission, that he may immediately make the proper inquiries and give me information. In the mean time, I find it generally supposed here that I am sent to negotiate, and that opinion appears to give great pleasure, if I can judge by the extreme civilities I meet

with from numbers of the principal people, who have done me the honor to visit me." [1]

The arrival of Franklin in Paris, on the 18th of December, excited at once the greatest interest in the American cause; his character and widely extended reputation made him the centre of observation at the capital, and aroused the liveliest expectation in men's minds as to the purpose of his coming and the probable effect of his mission upon the actions of the ministry. It became "the common topic of conversation, and gave birth to a thousand conjectures and reports" among all classes of French society, even before he had reached the city.[2] The Declaration of Independence had found an echo of sympathy among the French people, who watched with admiration the brave efforts of a struggling nation to be free, and in the thought of liberty they had already planted the seed of friendship which was ready to burst forth in open welcome to this messenger from the American people, coming to them first of all nations for encouragement and support.

Franklin found this to be so even at Nantes, as we have seen; it was emphatically so at Paris, where he was loaded with every possible evidence of consideration and respect, notwithstanding the insinuations that were industriously disseminated about him by the jealousy of the English Embassy. "It is very generally believed here," said Lord Stormont, "that he comes in the double capacity of a negotiator and a fugitive; this suspicion, joined to the knowledge of his former character and to that reputation of duplicity which he has so justly acquired, will, I hope, throw many difficulties in his way; yet there is certainly some danger to be apprehended from the general partiality of the people of this country to the American cause and

[1] Diplomatic Correspondence, Wharton, ii. 221.

[2] S. Deane to Gérard, 18th December, 1776, Etats-Unis, t. 1, No. 99: Doniol, La Participation de la France, ii. 102.

from the tempting offers which he is probably authorized to make."[1]

In the mean time, M. de Vergennes was anxious to meet and converse with him; and Franklin found that, although the ministry was not prepared to receive him openly as a "Plenipotentiary," it would not deny an audience to him and his colleagues. He therefore proceeded to ask for this, on the 23d of December, five days after his arrival, addressing the Comte de Vergennes as follows:

"SIR,—We beg leave to acquaint Your Excellency that we are appointed and fully empowered by the Congress of the United States of America to propose and negotiate a treaty of amity and commerce between France and the United States. The just and generous treatment their trading ships have received, by a free admission into the ports of this kingdom, with other considerations of respect, has induced the Congress to make this offer first to France. We request an audience of Your Excellency wherein we may have an opportunity of presenting our credentials; and we flatter ourselves that the propositions we are authorized to make are such as will not be found unacceptable.

"With the greatest regard, we have the honour to be

"Your Excellency's most obedient and most humble servants.

"B. FRANKLIN, SILAS DEANE, ARTHUR LEE."[2]

This request was complied with after a very short delay; though the Secretary of State, who was under the strict surveillance in these matters of Lord Stormont and the agents of the British Government, and was constrained to be more circumspect than he would doubtless have felt it necessary to be a few months before, did not invite the Commissioners to Versailles, but appointed an audience in the city of Paris, where he met them secretly on the 28th of December. After having listened courteously and attentively to their propositions, and having assured

[1] Grantham Papers, fol. 177.

[2] Diplomatic Correspondence, Wharton, ii. 239.

them of his good will, he made a report of the interview almost immediately to the Court of Spain.[1]

The times were difficult and dangerous for the negotiations which Dr. Franklin had come to Europe to undertake, and this he saw at a glance, knowing that he must make his way carefully if he wished to succeed at all; for he felt immediately from this interview and from the intercourse he had with people whose opinion he valued in France, that for some reason, while the nation was favorably inclined to the encouragement of the Colonies, "the Court viewed an approaching war with reluctance." Yet affairs at home were pressing, and impelled him to use the utmost diligence in obtaining assistance from a powerful nation whose recognition of the Colonies would produce at once an immense result in its moral effect upon the people, as well as upon foreign countries, and would furnish to the army and the navy those materials of which they stood so sadly in need.

Urged forward, therefore, by the consciousness of the responsibility resting upon him, dissatisfied also at having been merely admitted to a secret conference with the Secretary of State when he had announced himself and his colleagues as representatives authorized to treat for an independent people in the formation of an alliance of friendship and commerce, he determined to make a further attempt. Taking Mr. Deane and Mr. Lee with him, somewhat in disregard, perhaps, of the traditional methods of diplomatic procedure in the older Courts of Europe, but undoubtedly justified by the circumstances of the case and by the assurances of good will given him at the first interview, he went with them from Paris to Versailles, where they addressed the following note to M. de Vergennes:

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[1] Comte de Vergennes to Marquis d'Ossun, 4th January, 1777, Espagne, t. 583, No. 6: Doniol, La Participation de la France, ii. 113. See Diplomatic Correspondence, Wharton, ii. 248.

"Dr. Franklin, Mr. Deane, and Mr. Lee present their most respectful complimts. to the Count de Vergennes, and request an audience of his Excellency, to-morrow morning, at such hour as he shall be pleased to appoint.

"VERSAILLES, Jany. 5th, 1777, 6 o'clock in the evening." [1]

This was upon a Sunday, and the interview asked for was, consequently, to be upon the following Monday morning. M. de Vergennes could not grant it, for abundant reasons; since to have received the Commissioners at the Court in Versailles, as they requested, would have been tantamount to the formal recognition of the United States by France, which was above all things what he wished at that moment to avoid, and which, if he had then permitted it, would have been an immediate cause for war with Great Britain. He referred them, therefore, to his chief secretary, M. Gérard, to whom he wrote the same evening, that he wished him to say to the American gentlemen that he should not be at liberty the following day nor upon Tuesday; but he directed M. Gérard to meet them on the latter day at some place in Paris and learn from them the nature of the communication which they wished to make.[2] Dr. Franklin and his colleagues would not leave Versailles, however, without some sort of direct communication with the Secretary of State. They prepared a memorial [3] which they left for him before they came away. The most important part of this document was a formal demand for eight ships of the line completely equipped, to be paid for by the United States; for, said the Commissioners, since other European princes lent or hired their troops to England to be used against America, it would seem just that France should give the same sort of assistance to the United States if she saw fit to do so; that England ought not to take offence at this,

[1] Etats-Unis, t. 2, No. 8: Doniol, La Participation de la France, ii. 117, note.
[2] Etats-Unis, t. 2, No. 9: Doniol, ii. 117, note.
[3] Diplomatic Correspondence, Wharton, ii. 245.

but that, if she did, the combined forces of France, Spain, and the United States would be able to take away her West India islands and to destroy her commerce, thus reducing her to weakness and humiliation. To this the Commissioners added a request for arms and munitions of war, and made offers of union and friendship, with the advantage to accrue, if these were accepted, from the participation in that commerce which had been so fruitful a source of wealth to Great Britain, and which was now about to be taken away from her forever.

This document was signed by Benjamin Franklin, Silas Deane, and Arthur Lee.[1] The Comte de Vergennes communicated it at once to M. de Maurepas, and the Premier laid it before the King, for the purpose of receiving his orders before agreeing to a reply to it from the Cabinet. Four days later, on the 9th of January, 1777, the formal answer of the Government was prepared, and duly submitted to the King, who approved it, thus establishing definitively the relations between France and the United States as they were to continue for a considerable time to come. The request for vessels of war was declined, upon the ground that although the King would gladly give them without compensation, in accordance with the dignity of his Crown, if circumstances were such that he could properly do so, yet in the present exigency the interests of the kingdom required him to add to his forces rather than to take away from what he already had; besides, the sending of a few vessels of war to America would not produce the result desired, for they would immediately be followed by a greater number of English vessels, and, no matter under what flag they sailed, a masked squadron would be a legitimate cause for war

[1] Diplomatic Correspondence, Wharton, ii. 245. This document, in the Diplomatic Correspondence, is dated at Paris; but in the French translation, Etats-Unis, t. 2, No. 11, cited by M. Doniol in La Participation de la France, ii. 118, the date is "Versailles, 5 janv. 1777."

with any Power which should undertake to send it, and the same reasons would prevent France from sending her ships of war as convoys for American merchantmen, but that the interests of France and the Colonies, being identical, must draw the two countries together when the right moment should arrive, and that while it was not practicable to force the events which were to produce that union between them in the future, the Americans might feel certain of the friendship and sympathy of France. The note closed with this assurance: "The King has no wish to disturb the Americans in the procurement of such materials as they may be able to find in the course of trade within his kingdom, persuaded that they will strictly conform in their dealings to the express obligation of his treaties; and, without entering into the question as to what kinds of supplies the Americans may chance to need, His Majesty has decided to establish for them secretly certain resources from which they may obtain the means to strengthen their credit and to increase the number of their purchases."[1]

This reply was read to the Commissioners by M. Gérard, under the instructions of the Comte de Vergennes, who wished the Americans to understand the friendly attitude of France, but who, in the critical condition of political relations with England, could not permit anything of this character in writing to go beyond the control of the Department. The Commissioners expressed their gratification to M. Gérard after having heard it read.

They had every reason to be grateful to France. They had been assured again of her sympathy and friendship; they had been given permission to obtain in France whatever supplies they needed, so long as they did not compromise the Government; and, without their solicitation, the King had given them also a large sum of money to

[1] Etats-Unis, t. 2, No. 13 : Doniol, La Participation de la France, ii. 120.

help them buy what they required. The last paragraph of the reply of the Government refers to an amount of two millions of livres which King Louis XVI. had directed to be placed to their credit. In a subsequent report to the Committee of Secret Correspondence, the Commissioners wrote that they were informed that a grant had been made to them of two millions of livres from the Crown, of which five hundred thousand were ready to be paid down, and an equal sum was to be paid at the beginning of April, July, and October; "that such was the King's generosity, he exacted no conditions or promise of repayment, he only required that we should not speak to any one of our having received this aid. We have accordingly observed strictly this injunction, deviating only in this information to you, which we think necessary for your satisfaction, but earnestly requesting that you would not suffer it to be made public."[1]

Such, in the early part of the year 1777, was the position of affairs in France, England, Spain, and the United States in connection with the American Revolution; and it was in the midst of this complicated working of various political interests and diplomatic negotiations that the Marquis de La Fayette, moved by his own inspiration to help the struggling Colonists win their liberty, brave and earnest, of noble mind and generous heart, set out from France to go to North America.

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[1] B. Franklin and Silas Deane to the Committee of Secret Correspondence, 12th March, 1777: Diplomatic Correspondence, Sparks, i. 200.

CHAPTER VI.

PROGRESS OF THE WAR IN AMERICA UPON THE ARRIVAL OF LA FAYETTE.

La Fayette's vessel, the Victoire, reached America after a voyage of fifty-four days, having sailed from Los Pasajes, as we have already seen, on the 20th of April, 1777. It landed at South Inlet, near Georgetown, in South Carolina, on the 13th of June, the last part of the long and tedious voyage having been enlivened, a short time before they saw the coast, by the approach of an armed vessel which the followers of the Marquis mistook for an English man-of-war, but which proved to be an American, with whom the Victoire vainly endeavored to keep up, and also by the presence, off shore, of two British frigates known to be cruising there, into whose grasp there was very serious danger that they might now fall after all their hardships and privations on the sea.[1] But, fortunately for them, a strong northerly wind was blowing, which, while it helped them to reach their destination, carried the cruisers toward the south and gave the Victoire an opportunity to run in,—not the only time in his life, La Fayette said many years afterward, that the elements conspired in his favor.

The exact place of their landing is described by the Baron de Kalb, in a letter written two days later to his wife, as "at North Island, at the entrance to the Bay of Georgetown, fifteen miles from that town, in the port called South Inlet, in Carolina." He says that, as the wind was unfavorable to them in their efforts to reach

[1] Mémoires de ma Main, i. 16.

Charleston, where they intended to disembark, and as no one aboard the ship was sufficiently acquainted with the coast to tell where they were, the Marquis de La Fayette took Kalb, Mr. Price, the Chevalier du Buysson, and some of the other officers[1] with him in the ship's yawl, and, with the lieutenant and seven men to row, went ashore to make inquiries, and to see if they could pick up a pilot. Starting from the ship at two o'clock in the afternoon of Friday, the 13th of June, 1777, they rowed up the North Inlet until ten at night without meeting any one except some negroes who were fishing for oysters: these men could give them very little information, however, in reply to their inquiries, beyond the fact that they belonged to an officer in the American army and that there was a pilot at the upper end of the island; they offered to guide the strangers to the pilot and afterward to take them to their master's house. As the tide had now gone down and the Marquis could make no further headway in the yawl, he determined to leave it behind and to go on with two companions in the negroes' oyster-boat, in the hope of obtaining a pilot. About midnight they were set on shore by their conductors, and, seeing a light in the distance, they made their way in its direction. When they approached the house from which the light proceeded, the dogs began to bark, and the inmates supposed this to signal the approach of a band of marauders from some of the enemy's ships. A voice called out in the darkness demanding who they were and what they wanted, to which Kalb, who spoke English, replied that they were French officers who had just come ashore to serve in the Continental army, that their ship was at the mouth of the inlet, that they were seeking a pilot to bring her in, and that they asked shelter for the night for themselves.[2]

[1] This name appears in Kalb's letters as *Brice;* though the name signed to the certificate at Bordeaux, above referred to, is written "Price."

[2] Sparks, Writings of Washington, v. 450.

Thereupon they were immediately invited to come into the house, when upon inquiry and explanation they found they were in the summer residence of Major Benjamin Huger, a highly respected citizen of South Carolina, who received the strangers "with a cordial welcome and a generous hospitality." Having decided that the water in Georgetown Bay was too shallow to admit the Victoire, La Fayette sent a pilot to her with orders to go into Charleston harbor with the cargo and those of the officers who had remained on board, while Major Huger arranged to carry the Marquis, with Kalb and Mr. Price, thither by land.

The warmth and heartiness of this reception in America delighted La Fayette; it fulfilled his ideal of the people and the country he had been seeking, in whose interest he had left his own home and friends and for whom he had already undergone considerable anxiety and discomfort. The attractive surroundings of the place, the kind faces and friendly voices about him, filled him with tender feelings, and the peace and domestic comfort of a gentleman's house after the long weeks spent in the cabin of his ship made it seem like enchantment to him. He told Mr. Sparks that he had "retired to rest rejoiced that he had at last attained the haven of his wishes and was safely landed in America beyond the reach of his pursuers. The next morning was beautiful. The novelty of everything around him, the room, the bed with mosquito-curtains, the black servants who came to ascertain his wants, the beauty and strange appearance of the country as he saw it from his window, clothed in luxuriant verdure, all conspired to produce a magical effect, and to impress him with indescribable sensations."

In the mean time the Vicomte de Mauroy and six other officers who had remained on board the Victoire set sail for Charleston, where they arrived a few days later, without having met any of the enemy's cruisers, although M.

de La Fayette was so anxious for the fate of his vessel and his companions, from what he had heard after he reached Major Huger's house as to the constant presence along the coast of British men-of-war, that he hastily sent orders after the captain, both by land and by sea, to set the officers and crew ashore and to burn the ship;[1] but, as he said, "through some inconceivable good luck, the wind drove off the frigates for a short time, and my vessel came into port in broad daylight without seeing either friends or enemies." The Marquis set out on horseback for Charleston in company with Kalb, they having been furnished with horses by the kindness of Major Huger; and the other officers, for whom no conveyances could be procured in that remote district, made the journey on foot. These latter arrived there in a sad condition of clothing and general appearance; but as soon as it became known in the town who the party were, and what was their errand, they were treated with the greatest courtesy: the Marquis, in particular, as one of them wrote, had shown to him "all the honors due to a marshal of France."[2] Governor Rutledge, General Howe, and General Moultrie called upon him, and, besides receiving him most cordially, showed him the fortifications in the harbor and entertained him and his companions in Charleston, "that charming city," which La Fayette described as "worthy of its inhabitants," and where "everything attested the presence of cultivation and ease." He wrote to Mme. de La Fayette, on the 19th of June, 1777,[3] from Charleston, that everybody whom he met there sought to show him some politeness or attention, and that he had reason to feel highly gratified at his reception, although he had not as yet explained his plans

[1] La Fayette, Correspondance, i. 92.

[2] Journal of the Chevalier du Buysson, Etats-Unis, t. 4, No. 152: Doniol, La Participation de la France, iii. 215.

[3] Correspondance, i. 93.

to any one in detail; for he judged it better to wait until he should present himself to Congress before making a full statement as to the projects he had in view. He told her that the people were as agreeable as his enthusiasm had represented them.

"A simplicity of manners, a desire to please, the love of country and of liberty, and a pleasing equality, are to be found everywhere among them. The richest man and the poorest are upon the same social level, and, although there are some great fortunes in this country, I defy any one to discover the least difference in the bearing of one man to another. I began with life in the country at the house of Major Huger; now I am here in the city. Everything recalls more or less the English customs, though there is more of simplicity here than in England. The city of Charlestown [Charleston] is one of the most attractive, the best built, and inhabited by the most agreeable people, that I have ever seen. The American women are very beautiful, unaffected in manner, and of a charming neatness, which prevails everywhere in this country and receives the greatest attention, much more so even than in England. What delights me most is, that all the citizens are brothers. There are no poor people in America, not even what may be called peasants. Every man has his own property, and each has the same rights with the greatest land-owner in the country. The inns are quite different from those in Europe; the proprietor and his wife sit down with you to the meals and do the honors of the table; and when you leave, you pay without haggling over your bill. If you do not wish to go to an inn, there are country houses where any one who is a good American will be admitted and entertained as kindly as we receive our friends in Europe.

"As to myself, I have been welcomed in the most agreeable manner possible by everybody here. I have just this moment returned from a grand dinner that lasted five hours, given by a gentleman of this city in my honor. General Howe and General Moultrie were there, and several of the officers of my caravan. We drank many healths and spoke very bad English, which language, by the way, I am beginning now to use a little. To-morrow I shall go to return my visit. I shall take the gentlemen who accompany me to call upon the Governor, and then I shall make my preparations to leave."

The cargo of the Victoire could have been promptly

disposed of to advantage, but La Fayette discovered at Charleston that the captain had with him a note for forty thousand livres which the Marquis had made in Bordeaux in favor of the merchants from whom he had bought the ship, and that in his haste to escape from France he had signed an agreement, without fully understanding it, by which his vessel and cargo were to return there to be sold, with the condition attached that the note for forty thousand livres representing his unpaid balance of the purchase-money should then be first paid out of the proceeds of the sale, and also the additional amount of thirty-five per cent.,—twenty-five per cent. for insurance and ten per cent. commission.[1] This discovery caused him and his companions great disappointment, for they had expected to obtain money enough from the cargo to make them all comfortable, and the Marquis had promised to provide for everybody; whereas they found themselves now in the embarrassing position of not having the means to defray the expenses of the long journey that confronted them before they could join the army. After considerable difficulty, however, La Fayette succeeded in negotiating a loan at Charleston of about seven thousand dollars with which to equip his expedition. The Victoire soon afterward set sail for France, but in going out of Charleston harbor it struck upon the bar and was wrecked.[2]

After having bought such horses and conveyances as they could obtain, and having taken leave of their friends in Charleston, the little company set out upon their journey toward Philadelphia, on the 25th of June; a journey full of incident, as it proved, and not free from very considerable hardships, owing to the bad roads over which they travelled, the breaking down of their vehicles and the giving out of their horses, and the intense heat of the weather, from which all suffered and several fell

[1] Journal of Du Buysson.

[2] Mémoires de ma Main, i. 17.

ill. The Chevalier du Buysson, who travelled with La Fayette, and who afterward entered the Continental army as aide-de-camp to the Baron de Kalb, at whose side he was when that brave soldier died at the battle of Camden, wrote in his Journal an interesting account of the visit to Charleston and the subsequent events of this journey and of the arrival at Philadelphia. He says,—

"We divided ourselves into three parties. La Fayette, the Baron de Kalb, and those of us who came ashore with them hired four carriages to take us and our luggage. The aide-de-camp of the Marquis undertook to be our guide, although he had no possible idea of the country. This was our marching order as we came out of Charleston. The procession was headed by one of the Marquis's people in a hussar's uniform. The Marquis's carriage was a sort of uncovered sofa [*sofa découvert*] upon four springs, with a fore-carriage. At the side of his carriage he had one of his servants on horseback, who acted as his squire. The Baron de Kalb was in the same carriage. The two colonels, La Fayette's counsellors, followed in a second carriage with two wheels. The third was for the aides-de-camp, the fourth for the luggage, and the rear was brought up by a negro on horseback.

"Four days later, some of our carriages were reduced to splinters; several of the horses, which were old and unsteady, were either worn out or lame, and we were obliged to buy others along the road. This outlay took all our money. We had to leave behind us a part of our luggage, and part of it was stolen. We travelled a great part of the way on foot, often sleeping in the woods, almost dead with hunger, exhausted by the heat, several of us suffering from fever and from dysentery. At last, after thirty-two days of marching, we arrived at Philadelphia in a more pitiable condition even than when we first came into Charleston [*i.e.*, those who had gone from Major Huger's on foot]. I think I am safe in saying that in Europe no campaign would be harder to go through than was this journey; for there the hardships are not continuous, they are even compensated for by frequent pleasures; but here our troubles increased with every day, and they gave us no consolation but the hope of arriving at Philadelphia. We were encouraged by the bright prospect of the reception we counted upon from the people there, and I can say with truth that this thought would have induced us to undergo much greater hardships with the same willingness and the same

lightness of heart that I felt after once I had made up my mind. We were all animated by the same spirit. The enthusiasm of La Fayette would have incited all the rest of us, if any one had been less courageous than he."

It is, indeed, remarkable that throughout La Fayette's career in America his letters invariably express friendship, attachment, and warmth of heart toward the people whose cause he adopted; the fatigues and hardships he endured never wore out his patience; the heat of summer and the cold of winter found him ever cheerful and ready; his criticisms are those of a friend and a lover, and wherever he went he strove to see, and did see, something good and something kind in the world about him. This high-minded devotion won the hearts of those with whom he came in contact; it endeared him to Washington, to the officers and soldiers of the Continental army, and to the Colonists of a hundred years ago; it has established his memory in the affection of the American people to-day and for all time to come.

During his journey to Philadelphia, he wrote to Mme. de La Fayette, on the 17th of July, 1777, from Petersburg, "You have probably [by his former letters] heard of the beginning of my journey and how brilliantly I started out in a carriage. I have to inform you that we are now on horseback, after having broken the wagons in my usual praiseworthy fashion, and I expect to write you before long that we have reached our destination on foot. There have been some fatigues, but, although a few of my companions have suffered from them, I have scarcely noticed them."[1] And in his Mémoires he said,[2] "M. de La Fayette travelled nearly nine hundred miles on horseback to present himself to Congress; passing through the two Carolinas, Virginia, and the States of Maryland and Delaware, he reached the capital of Pennsylvania.

[1] Correspondance, i. 98.

[2] Vol. i. p. 17.

Whilst he studied the language and the people, he saw also agriculture and products that were entirely new to him; the vast forests, the great rivers, everything, indeed, in this country, give to nature an appearance of youth and of majesty."

La Fayette arrived in Philadelphia with his little troop on the 27th of July. They went at once to present themselves to Congress, with the papers which they had brought with them from France, and also the contract entered into by them with Mr. Deane. It happened, however, to their disappointment, that they were not the only foreign officers who had come to serve in the American army, large numbers of adventurers and others having flocked to the Colonies upon the outbreak of the war, chiefly from the West India islands, to offer their services, which were accompanied usually by such exorbitant demands as to rank and privilege that they could not be complied with; and in several instances where these men had been granted commissions in the army the feeling was very strong, both among the Continental officers and in Congress itself, that the confidence reposed in them had been misplaced; so that everybody connected with the Government had become exceedingly sensitive upon the subject of foreigners who asked for commissions in the army. Therefore the arrival of this new set of strangers, who presented the usual demands for appointment in the army, and showed the usual expectation of obtaining high rank, fell at an unfortunate moment for them. They were not at first distinguished from others who had preceded them upon the same errand, but were looked upon as foreigners whom nobody wanted, and their welcome was consequently not so cordial as they had pictured it to themselves whilst they were plodding from Charleston toward Philadelphia. The Chevalier du Buysson says,—

"We arrived on the 27th of July, in the morning. After having brushed ourselves up a little, we went to see the President

of Congress, to whom we presented our letters of recommendation and also our contracts. He sent us to see M. Moose [Morris (?)], a member of the Congress, who made an appointment to meet us on the following day at the door of the Congress; and in the mean time our papers were read and examined. The next day we were punctual in keeping our appointment, but we were made to wait a long time. Finally M. Moose appeared, with another member, and said to us, 'This gentleman speaks French very well, and he is intrusted with the matters that concern people of your nationality; hereafter your communications will all be with him.' He then went in, and the other member, M. —— [Mr. Lovell], talked with us in the street, where he left us, after having treated us, in excellent French, like a set of adventurers. He ended his speech by saying, 'Gentlemen, have you any authority from Mr. Deane? We authorized him to send us four French engineers; but, instead of that, he has sent us Mr. du Coudray and some men who pretend to be engineers but are not, and some artillerists who have never seen service. We then instructed Mr. Franklin to send us four engineers, and they have come. It seems that French officers have a great fancy to enter our service without being invited. It is true we were in need of officers last year, but now we have experienced men and plenty of them.'

"This was our first reception by the Congress, and we did not know what to think of it; indeed, it would be impossible for any one to be more stupefied than we were. Would it have been possible for M. de La Fayette, M. de Kalb, and M. de Mauroy, followed by ten officers recommended as we had been, and secretly approved, if not openly avowed, by the Government of France, to expect such a reception as this?

"We determined to wait and to discover the cause of this affront, if possible, before making any complaint. We attributed it, and rightly, to the misconduct of certain of our compatriots who had preceded us; for we soon heard of the bad behavior of several of them, and the discredit which their actions had thrown upon letters of recommendation brought by them from our colonies, and we discovered that certain other things also had had an influence in this connection."

This was true; the foreign officers had given serious cause for disappointment both in the army and in the country, and they had been for a long time the source of embarrassment to the Commander-in-Chief. General Washington, who had no prejudice whatever against men

from other countries, provided they were men of merit, saw the impossibility of satisfying the ambition of most of them, and, what was a great deal more serious, the injustice of putting foreigners into the army with rank superior to our own people who were making sacrifices for the country, and who in many cases had recruited the men whom they now commanded. He wrote early in the year 1777, long before La Fayette's arrival,[1]—

"I have often mentioned to you the distress I am every now and then laid under by the application of French officers for commissions in our service. This evil, if I may call it so, is a growing one; for, from what I learn, they are coming in swarms from old France and the Islands. There will therefore be a necessity of providing for them or discountenancing them. To do the first is difficult; and the last disagreeable, and perhaps impolitic, if they are men of merit; and it is impossible to distinguish these from mere adventurers, of whom I am convinced there is the greater number. They seldom bring more than a commission and a passport, which, we know, may belong to a bad as well as a good officer. Their ignorance of our language and their inability to recruit men are insurmountable obstacles to their being ingrafted into our Continental battalions; for our officers, who have raised their men, and have served through the war upon pay that has hitherto not borne their expenses, would be disgusted if foreigners were put over their heads; and, I assure you, few or none of these gentlemen look lower than field-officers' commissions. To give them all brevets, by which they have rank and draw pay without doing any service, is saddling the Continent with vast expense; and to form them into corps would be only establishing corps of officers; for, as I said before, they cannot possibly raise any men."

And to Richard Henry Lee, in Congress, he wrote,[2]—

"Under the privilege of friendship, I take the liberty to ask you what Congress expect I am to do with the many foreigners they have at different times promoted to the rank of field-officers, and, by the last resolve, two to that of colonels? In making

[1] To the President of Congress, 20th February, 1777: Sparks, Writings of Washington, iv. 327.

[2] 17th May, 1777: Sparks, Writings of Washington, iv. 423.

these appointments, it is much to be feared that all the attending circumstances are not taken into consideration. To oblige the adventurers of a nation which we want to interest in our cause, may be one inducement; and to get rid of their importunity, another; but this is viewing the matter by halves, or on one side only. These men have no attachment nor ties to the country, further than interest binds them; they have no influence, and are ignorant of the language they are to receive and give orders in; consequently great trouble or much confusion must follow. But this is not the worst; they have not the smallest chance to recruit others; and our officers think it exceedingly hard, after they have toiled in this service, and probably have sustained many losses, to have strangers put over them, whose merit perhaps is not equal to their own, but whose effrontery will take no denial.

"The management of this matter, give me leave to add, sir, is a delicate point; for, although no one will dispute the right of Congress to make appointments, every person will assume the privilege of judging of the propriety of them; and good policy, in my opinion, forbids the disgusting of a whole corps to gratify the pride of an individual; for it is by the zeal and activity of our own people that the cause must be supported, and not by a few hungry adventurers. Besides, the error of these appointments is now clear and manifest, and the views of Congress evidently defeated; for by giving rank to people of no reputation or service, you have disgusted their own countrymen, or, in other words, raised their expectations to an insatiable pitch. For the man who was a captain in France, finding another who was only a subaltern there, or perhaps nothing, appointed to a majority with us, extends his views instantly to a regiment; in like manner, the field-officer can accept nothing less than a brigade, and so on, by which means the man of real rank and merit must be excluded, or perhaps your whole military system disordered. In the mean while I am haunted and teased to death by the importunity of some, and dissatisfaction of others." [1]

It is not strange that in this condition of public feeling in America the arrival of a new contingent of French officers did not excite great pleasure, or that their reception in Philadelphia was, as La Fayette said, "more like

[1] See, also, letters to Major Colerus, 19th May, 1777: Sparks, Writings of Washington, iv. 429; to the President of Congress, 6th June, 1777: ibid., 450; to Benjamin Franklin, 17th August, 1777: ibid., v. 32.

a dismissal than a welcome."[1] Having run the risk, however, of leaving France against the King's orders, and having displayed an indomitable energy in beating down all obstacles, in crossing the ocean and in the fatigues of the long journey from Charleston, La Fayette was not willing to accept this as final, or to turn back because a gentleman had met him in the street and told him that no more French officers were wanted in America. He determined to present himself to Congress directly, at all events, and to be heard. He prepared an address to it which he succeeded in having read, setting forth his circumstances and the reasons of his being there, in the course of which he said, "After the sacrifices that I have made in this cause, I have the right to ask two favors at your hands: the one is, to serve without pay, at my own expense; and the other, that I be allowed to serve at first as a volunteer."[2]

An appeal of this kind, so different in tone from the exactions of other foreign officers with whom the American Congress had come in contact, attracted immediate attention; as did, no doubt, the extreme youth of the Marquis, the letters he brought with him, his unquestioned rank and influence in France, and the enthusiasm displayed by him for the American cause. The Chevalier du Buysson says that Mr. Lovell ("le même qui nous avoit si mal reçus") was sent to confer with them again, "accompanied this time by another member, who was more skilful, as well as more polite" to them, and that these gentlemen then made a sort of apology to La Fayette. The second member appears to have been sent to sound the Marquis, and in a private interview he promised him anything and everything in order to draw him out. Evidently satisfied with the result of this conference, the member of Congress had a second conference with him, in which he

[1] Mémoires de ma Main, i. 18.

[2] Ibid., i. 19.

arranged that La Fayette should accept from Congress the rank of major-general, but to date only from that time, without regard to his contract with Mr. Deane, and also without pay or other compensation and without any command or the promise of one. This conclusion having been reached, Congress passed the following Resolution, on the 31st of July, 1777:[1]

"Whereas the Marquis de La Fayette, out of his great zeal to the cause of liberty, in which the United States are engaged, has left his family and connections, and at his own expence come over to offer his services to the United States without pension or particular allowance, and is anxious to risque his life in our cause—Resolved, That his service be accepted, and that in consideration of his zeal, illustrious family and connections he have rank and commission of Major General in the Army of the United States."

La Fayette's commission was immediately sent to him. It appears[2] that the French Court had insisted that the American Commissioners should write to Congress requesting that the Marquis de La Fayette should not be employed in the Continental service; but the Commissioners made no great haste to comply with this, and when the request finally reached America it was too late: La Fayette was already in the army and had begun to be favorably known.

Upon receiving his commission as major-general, La Fayette wrote to Congress the following letter, the original of which is still preserved in the Archives of the Department of State at Washington:[3]

"To the Honorable Mr Hancok, President of Congress, Philadelphia.

"the 13 august 1777

"Sir

"I beg that you will receive yourself and present to Congress my thanks for the Commission of Major General in the Army of

[1] Journals of Congress, iii. 303.

[2] Mémoires de La Fayette, Fragment B, i. 72.

[3] Papers of the Old Congress.

the 13 august 1777

Sir

I beg that you will receive yourself and present to Congress my thanks for the Commission of Major General in the Army of the United States of America which I have been honor'd with in their name the feelings of my heart, long before it became my duty, engaged me in the love of the American cause I not only consider'd it as the cause of Honor Virtue and universal happiness, but felt myself empassioned with the warmest affection for a Nation who exhibited by their resistance to give an example of Justice and Courage to the Universe

I shall neglect nothing on my part to justify the confidence which the Congress of the United States has been pleased to repose in me as my highest ambition has ever been to do every thing only for the best of the cause in which I am engaged, I wish to have near the person of General Washington till such time as he may think proper to entrust me with a Division of the Army

It is now at an anxious time that I'll mention to Congress the officers who come over with me, whose interests are for me as my own, and the consideration which they deserve by their merits their rank, their state and reputation in France

I am Sir with the sentiments which every good american owe to you

Your most obedient
Servant The Mis de La Fayette

Addressed :

To
The Honorable The Congress
President of Congress
Philadelphia

the United States of America which I have been honor'd with in their name the feelings of my heart, long before it became my duty, engaged me in the love of the American cause. I not only consider'd it as the cause of Honor, Virtue, and universal Happinness, but felt myself empressed with the warmest affection for a Nation who exhibited by their resistence so fine an exemple of Justice and Courage to the Universe.

"I schall neglect nothing on my part to justify the confidence which the Congress of the United States has been pleased to repose in me as my highest ambition has ever been to do every thing only for the best of the cause in which I am engaged. I wish to serve near the person of General Washington till such time as he may think proper to entrust me with a division of the Army.

"it is now as an american that I'l mention every day to congress the officers who came over with me, whose interests are for me as my own, and the consideration which they deserve by their merits their ranks, their state and reputation in france.

"I am sir with the sentiments which every good american owe to you

"Your most obedient
"servant the mq^{is} de lafayette."

La Fayette was not unmindful, in the fulness of his own success, of the French officers who had come with him, and whose expectations were in several cases destined to be sadly disappointed. Some of these men were intimate friends whom he had known at home and whose interests he had close at heart, like the Vicomte de Mauroy and the Baron de Kalb, who still stood waiting for an answer from Congress to their request for employment in the army, while others had been entire strangers to him up to the time when he met them on his vessel at Bordeaux.[1] But he generously exerted himself in favor of all, using what little influence he could bring to bear under circumstances that at best offered extremely slender hope of a favorable result. The Chevalier du Buysson said, "He did everything that was possible for our appointment, but in vain, for he had no influence. But if

[1] Mémoires de ma Main, i. 19.

he had had his way, de Kalb would have been major-general and we should all have had places."

The Baron de Kalb, especially, felt the mortification of this apparent neglect upon the part of Congress, after having been assured of a command by Mr. Deane before leaving France, and in view of the appointment of a man so much younger than he, and one who had seen so much less service, as La Fayette. The idea stung him, that he should have to return to France in the position of having been rejected after a personal offer of his services to an army of so little prestige as that of the Colonial "insurgents" in North America, and he could not face the loss of influence and support that he was sure to suffer with the Comte de Broglie if, instead of having succeeded in the ambitious plan of the "Stathoudérat," for which he had come, he should have been dismissed by the Congress without even a hearing. He wrote an appeal to the President of Congress, in which the bitterness of his disappointment is distinctly visible in the sharp criticisms upon the action of Mr. Silas Deane in making an engagement with him which he had no power to carry out, and in the emphatic statement of his own case in view of the circumstances that brought him to America; and, not without some show of irritation, he asked that he should either receive the appointment in the army which had been agreed upon, or, if he were obliged to return to France, that he should be reimbursed for his outlay in coming to America and the very considerable expense he had been put to after arriving here.[1] "I do not think that either my name, my services, or my person are proper objects to be trifled with or laughed at. I cannot tell you, sir, how deeply I feel the injury done to me, and how ridiculous it seems to me to make people leave their homes, families, and affairs to cross the sea under a thousand dif-

[1] Kapp's Kalb, p. 116.

ferent dangers, to be received and to be looked at with contempt by those from whom you were to expect but warm thanks. . . . I should be sorry to be compelled to carry my case against Mr. Deane or his successors for damages. And such an action would injure his credit and negotiations, and those of the state at Court."

It was a difficult case, for, certainly, Congress had not been instrumental in making these gentlemen leave their homes to come across the sea; on the contrary, it was greatly embarrassed by their presence, as was also the Commander-in-Chief; and yet they had come bearing a formal agreement entered into by them with Mr. Deane, the agent of the American Congress. Mr. Deane had exceeded his authority; and therein lay the cause of this difficulty.

In reply to the demands of the Baron de Kalb, M. de Mauroy, and others of their following, Congress took the definite course of disavowing Mr. Deane's appointments; but, since these gentlemen were undoubtedly entitled to some recognition and proper consideration, it thanked them officially for having come to America, and decided to defray their expenses both in coming here and in returning to France, by a resolution adopted on the 8th of September, 1777,[1] as follows:

"Congress took into consideration the report of the Committee on foreign applications, wherein they set forth, That besides a number of officers who are come from Europe and the West Indies of their own accord to solicit for rank and employment in the American Army, there are others who have proceeded upon the encouragement of conventions made and signed at Paris by Silas Deane, esquire, as agent for the United States of North America; that Mr. Deane had no authority to make such conventions, and that Congress therefore are not bound to ratify or fulfil them.

"Your Committee further report, that the baron de Kalb and the viscount de Mauroy, with a number of officers who came with

[1] Journals of Congress, iii. 377.

them from France, have offered their service, provided their engagements with Mr. Deane, in respect to rank, are fulfilled ; but that the American Army having been arranged before the arrival of these gentlemen in America, their expectations cannot be complied with without deranging it and thereby injuring at so critical a juncture the American cause ; that the zeal however of these gentlemen and their consequent expences merit the attention of Congress ; wherefore your Committee report the following resolve :

"*Resolved*, That the thanks of Congress be given to the baron de Kalb and the viscount de Mauroy, with the officers who accompany them, for their zeal in passing over to America to offer their service to these United States, and that their expences to this Continent and on their return to France be paid.

"*Resolved*, That Congress agree to the said report and resolve.

"*Ordered*, That the baron de Kalb and the viscount de Mauroy be furnished with a copy of the foregoing report and resolution, attested by the secretary ; also that any of the officers accompanying them, who may desire it, be furnished with such a copy."

Thereupon the Baron de Kalb and his followers prepared immediately for their return, Kalb having received from Congress the sum of money due to them and having distributed it among his companions, and most of them actually returned to France. The party left Philadelphia on the 15th of September. The Baron de Kalb, with Messrs. de Lesser, de Valfort, and du Buysson, concluded to take the Southern route, in the hope of an opportunity to embark from one of the Southern ports ; while Messrs. de Mauroy, de Fayolles, de Franval, de Vrigny, Dubois-Martin, and Candon set out for New England, with the purpose of sailing either from Boston or from Portsmouth. M. de Gimat and M. de la Colombe remained as aides-de-camp to the Marquis de La Fayette, and M. de Bedaulx was made captain by brevet by act of Congress.[1] M. Capitaine du Chesnoy, a skilful draughtsman and topographical engineer, remained, and became also aide-de-camp to General de La Fayette.

[1] Journals of Congress, 15th September, 1777, iii. 394.

But it was not the destiny of the Baron de Kalb ever to see France again: he had proceeded only as far as Bethlehem upon his return, when he was overtaken by a messenger who announced to him that Congress had given him a commission as major-general,[1] for on the 15th of September, 1777, in the session of Congress, it was "*Resolved*, that another Major-General be appointed in the army of the United States—The ballots being taken, baron de Kalb was elected;"[2] and this commission was shortly afterward "dated the same day with that of the Marquis de La Fayette, agreeable to the baron's request."[3]

Thus, while Kalb found that he must give up all hope of serving his patron, the Comte de Broglie, in the design of making that nobleman Generalissimo of the American armies, he decided to accept the offer of Congress, and, remaining in America, to enter the army as a Continental officer. He saw at a glance that a people who were willing to endure the privations and hardships of the campaign of the preceding year, and the sufferings of the winter of 1776–77, who had a Commander-in-Chief like General Washington, able to encourage his countrymen in the darkest hour of their adversity by the example of his own devotion and bravery, and who could hold them together in the face of the vastly superior British forces triumphantly advancing through New Jersey, and lead them to the attack at Trenton and at Princeton when in point of fact he was defeated and almost exhausted, did not need the aid of a foreign nobleman either to inspire them in the interest of their cause or to direct them against the enemy. It taxes the imagination at this day to conceive that any one had ever thought seriously of such a thing. And yet the Comte

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[1] Kapp's Kalb, 118.
[2] Journals of Congress, iii. 395.
[3] Ibid., 410.

de Broglie's idea had nothing in it that was unreasonable from his point of view: the difficulty was that it was based upon premises that were wrong because he did not know the character of the people with whom he was dealing. The "Stathoudérat" was intended to be both serviceable and beneficent in the struggle for independence of a remote and helpless people; but, while the American Colonists were remote, they were not helpless. Kalb wrote to his patron that "it is impossible to execute the great design I have so gladly come to subserve," for, he said, it would be regarded no less as an act of shameful injustice to Washington than as an outrage upon the honor of the country.[1] The subsequent career of the Baron de Kalb is well known and rightly appreciated by the people of the United States: he died like a hero on the 19th of August, 1780, in defence of the American flag.

The situation in America was not very attractive nor the cause of liberty very enticing to one who was not firmly bound by honor and patriotism to a struggle which called for the sacrifice of everything that men hold dear, in this determined effort to be free, at the moment when the Marquis de La Fayette thus presented himself to Congress and devoted his energy and zeal to the interests of the people. An army composed of men hastily drawn from the pursuits of domestic life, for short terms of service which did not enable them to grow accustomed to the discipline of the camp before it became necessary to allow them to go home, and to fill their places by others equally unprepared, commanded by officers whose nominations had frequently been controlled by political considerations, "of whom nearly all were inexperienced, many unteachable, and some of untried courage,"[2] without equipment in arms, without tents or ammunition,

[1] Kapp's Kalb, 127.

[2] Bancroft, History of the United States, ix. 389.

many even without clothing, and exhausted by the hardships of exposure and defeat,—this was the spectacle presented during the campaign of the end of the year 1776 and the first half of 1777, by the defenders of the independence of the United States of America. The war had broken out at a time when the whole country did not contain supplies of arms, ammunition, and military equipment enough for even a moderate body of men; there had been no means of buying these in other countries, because the Government had no money; no revenues were coming in through the channels of trade, because they were closed; and there was no power to raise the necessary means by taxation on the part of Congress. Besides this, the population of the Middle States, which were at that time the seat of hostilities, was largely disaffected toward the American cause: wearied by the long duration of the contest which they had not expected, and having lost something of the enthusiasm that followed immediately upon the opposition to Great Britain, many of the inhabitants of New York, Pennsylvania, and New Jersey openly accepted the offers of the British Commissioners and returned to their allegiance, while of those who remained there were numbers who could not at most be called more than half-hearted friends.

The incidents of the last campaign, in New York and New Jersey, had been accompanied by such a combination of reverses and disappointments that there was little room for encouragement amid the gloom in America.

Almost at the very moment of the publishing of the Declaration of Independence in Philadelphia, General Howe returned from Halifax, whither he had gone upon the evacuation of Boston, and with an army of veteran troops thoroughly disciplined and splendidly equipped with arms and artillery, accompanied by skilful engineers and reinforced by the recent accession of the subsidized Hessians and Waldeckers, came into New York harbor

and landed on Staten Island on the 3d and 4th of July, 1776. His purpose was to gain possession of the Hudson River, and, once strongly intrenched there, to cut off communications between New England and the Middle States, whilst the strength of his position would enable him, as occasion might require, to attack the State of New York on the north, to send his troops eastward into Connecticut, or to conduct operations against New Jersey and Pennsylvania, and he would thus at the same time keep open the most direct communication with Canada. He was supported in this plan of operations by a strong naval force commanded by his brother, Admiral Lord Howe, who arrived in American waters and took up his position near Staten Island very shortly afterward, on the 12th of July.

The campaign was well arranged to succeed; it had all the advantages that military organization could give it to insure success; the army and navy had prestige as well as strength, and it was not without reason that the British ministers confidently expected that this year would end the war. At the very outset, indeed, the superiority of this armament seemed to the British Government about to inflict the punishment of an offended King upon his rebellious subjects who had refused his clemency and who even now continued to bear arms in defiance of the offers of pardon and forgiveness which Admiral Howe and his brother were instructed to make to those who would submit. But it was not alone the weakened and tattered forces of the Colonists that this splendid array was to contend with in the campaign which followed, with disaster to the British arms; there was also to be reckoned the spirit which animated them in a struggle against wrong done to what they held to be sacred and their own. General Washington replied to Sir William Howe's messenger, sent to offer the royal favor, that "those who had committed no fault wanted no pardon, and that the

Americans were only defending what they deemed their indubitable rights."[1]

It was this spirit, supported by the patience, the endurance, and the noble courage of Washington himself, that decided the event. General Howe was of a sluggish nature, fond of ease, self-indulgent, cautious to the point of neglecting opportunities, with no great heartiness for his task of subduing a people whom he does not appear to have hated; he kept a good table, and loved to pass an evening with his mistress or his officers at a game of cards in a comfortable house, forgetful of danger. He had opposed to him in the American commander an austere man, the story of whose life is filled with acts of self-denial that excite the admiration of the hearer, and whose very soul was devoted to the cause of liberty in which he was then engaged; always alert to impending danger, never regardless of the slightest opportunity to take advantage of circumstances, brave to the extent of almost unreasonable exposure in battle, sharing the extremities of a winter campaign in common with his soldiers,—a bold fighter who astonished the enemy by turning upon them to strike a blow when they had thought him so far reduced as to be unable to move.

The first operations of the campaign were very disastrous to the Americans. The troops concentrated by General Howe in the vicinity of New York were estimated at twenty-four thousand men, and reinforcements were expected still further to increase their number. Those of General Washington consisted of ten thousand men, which number was enlarged to seventeen thousand, of whom nearly four thousand were sick from exposure to which they were not accustomed; and with this inadequate force he was in danger of sudden attack, whilst it was necessary for him at the same time to defend New

[1] Marshall, Life of Washington, ii. 423.

York, Governor's Island, Long Island, and Paulus Hook, dividing his forces in the defence of posts some of which were fifteen miles distant from others, with navigable waters between them. "These things," said Washington, "are melancholy, but they are nevertheless true." Yet he added that the superiority of the enemy and the expected attack did not seem to have depressed the spirits of his men, and that, "under every disadvantage, my utmost exertions shall be employed to bring about the great end we have in view; though the appeal may not terminate so happily as I could wish, yet the enemy will not succeed in their views without considerable loss. Any advantage they may gain, I trust will cost them dear."[1]

The attack soon followed. In August, 1776, General Howe made a landing upon Long Island, where he had on the 25th of the month a force of twenty thousand men, which has been since described as the most perfect army of that day in the world, for experience, discipline, equipments, and artillery, and was supported by more than four hundred ships and transports in the bay, besides ten ships of the line and twenty frigates.[2] On the 27th of August occurred the battle of Long Island, which resulted in disaster to the Americans and the retreat of their army, three days later, across the East River to New York. Thither they were pursued by the overwhelmingly superior forces of the British general, who came on with resistless power, and before whom they yielded step by step the ground which they were unable longer to defend. New York City was soon entirely in possession of the British, and the army of Washington lay upon the heights of Harlem, worn out, broken, wet from the driving rain to which they were now exposed through loss of blankets, camp-equipage, and tents, almost exhausted by the heavy burden of their adversity.

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[1] Marshall, Life of Washington, ii. 429.

[2] Bancroft, History of the United States, ix. 85.

This was the situation at the middle of September, a little more than two months from the time when the British force made its appearance in New York harbor. The American position at Harlem was sufficiently strong, protected as it was by an intrenched camp, to relieve it for the moment from the danger of an attack, the purpose of General Howe being rather to draw the Continentals into an engagement in the open country, where they would fight under very great disadvantage and would be in extreme danger of annihilation,—a purpose, however, which was perfectly understood by General Washington, and which he was careful to frustrate. For a short time in the early part of October the two armies lay opposite each other; that of Washington preparing, as far as its resources would permit, to regain its strength and repair its losses in anticipation of a further conflict which it was evident could not be long delayed; that of General Howe waiting quietly for more artillery and military stores which had been ordered forward from Staten Island, and for reinforcements under General Knyphausen, who joined him shortly afterward with the second division of the German troops.

It soon became evident to General Washington that the effort of the British now was to gain the rear of his camp, north of Harlem, if possible, and thus to force him from his present position or to surround him and cut him off entirely from communication with the country; of which, indeed, there was grave danger, for three British frigates had passed up the Hudson River, in spite of the obstructions intended to prevent them, and quite undisturbed by the fire from Forts Washington and Lee, on either bank, while General Howe had already begun to move his army through Hell Gate into Long Island Sound, where they had disembarked at Frog's Point and Pell's Point, and were moving by the way of Pelham Manor in the direction of New Rochelle. At a council

of the American general officers, on the 16th of October, it was decided that, in view of their exposure to being completely cut off and forced to surrender, a change of position must be made and York Island must be abandoned; with the exception, however, of Fort Washington, in deference to the expressed wish of Congress that the navigation of the Hudson River should be obstructed at all hazards, and because of a lingering hope that in some way the British ships might still be prevented from passing up.

Immediately upon this decision, the American army began a further retreat toward the north, extending its line in a series of intrenched camps for a distance of some twelve miles beyond King's Bridge, and retiring cautiously until the 26th of October, when General Washington took up a strong position in the high ground at White Plains, his right wing protected by the Bronx, upon which it rested, whilst his left extended northward into the hills behind, holding the advantage of position there and keeping open a line of retreat should that become necessary. Up to this time the American army had continued to retire before the advancing enemy, and at every point the superiority of General Howe's forces had made itself felt. Long Island was his; York Island was under his control, for the single garrison at Fort Washington, although it still held out in its hopeless attempt to protect the Hudson River, was within his easy reach at any moment that he should decide to invest it; and the British war-ships now ascended the stream in order to cover his flank upon that side and to lend additional strength to his position as he advanced toward the north; yet, in point of fact, he had made extremely little progress toward the subjection of the Colonists or the termination of the war, if we consider what had been expected of him, and what with reason he might himself have expected from the splendid armament under his command, with all its advantages of

munitions, of training, and of numbers. He had succeeded only in making a lodgement in the country, and the very fact that he had not done more began to have its effect upon his antagonists, whose spirits revived and whose courage to resist him was daily increased. He had failed in his effort to surprise the American commander and to draw him into an unequal contest in the plain; while, on the other hand, his own time was being skilfully wasted by the movements of his adversary in a season when the weather was growing unsuitable to military operations, and when it would soon be necessary to close the campaign and to go into winter quarters; to do which, however, with nothing more gained than at present, would be disgrace. He had forced Washington into a position, at last, among the hills where the advantages were somewhat more equally divided with the Continental army; for now the number of the American troops was about thirteen thousand, equal to those opposing them under General Howe; and the encampment at White Plains was so strongly defended that it seemed to the British general very dangerous to attack. Nevertheless it was necessary to do something to prevent further loss of time. He decided to give battle. Therefore, on the morning of the 28th of October he led his army out in two columns to the assault of Washington's position, until within three-quarters of a mile of it, when the Americans were seen drawn up in order of battle, confident of the result and well intrenched upon hilly ground. Even then General Howe was unwilling to risk the event of a general engagement, and, deciding not to attack General Washington's centre, the point nearest to him and most exposed, he consumed the day in the investment of a piece of high ground, called Chatterton's Hill, something less than a mile southwest of Washington's camp, which was occupied by a small body of Americans. In this encounter, which is known as the battle of White Plains,

he employed some four thousand of his men, the rest of the army having seated themselves on the ground to witness the spectacle.

At the end of the day, General Howe had taken Chatterton's Hill, but nothing else; while Washington was preparing for a further resistance, by sending his sick and his stores to the rear of his camp and by throwing up additional works to strengthen his position. The two armies stood thus opposite to each other on the two following days, the 29th and 30th of October,—the British waiting for reinforcements which had been sent for from York Island and from Mamaroneck, and which were now expected to come up, in order that the assault might be renewed upon the 31st. But in the mean time a violent rain-storm had set in, which prevented the fulfilment of this intention, and on the 1st of November General Howe decided to abandon his attempt at White Plains and to change altogether the plan of his operations, hoping to gain the advantage over Washington which he had thus far failed to attain, by a sudden diversion across the Hudson River and an inroad into the country of New Jersey. He withdrew his army, therefore, from its camp at White Plains to Dobbs's Ferry, and thence retired, a few days later, slowly down the river to King's Bridge.

General Washington was immediately aware of this purpose, and he rightly conjectured from the enemy's movements that his first step would be the reduction of Fort Washington, in order to secure undisturbed possession of York Island before crossing the river to open a campaign on the west bank. In order to counteract this purpose as far as possible, and with a reasonable expectation of checking the British advance into New Jersey, Washington directed the evacuation of Fort Washington, with the view of saving his men in the garrison there and of securing the artillery and stores; and, having left a sufficient body of troops to protect the country to the

north of White Plains, he proceeded to Peekskill and crossed the Hudson River with a part of his force on the 13th of November, to join General Greene, who was then in command in New Jersey, near Fort Lee. Unfortunately, this well-conceived plan of General Washington's was not supported by his subordinate officers. He found, to his great disappointment, that Fort Washington was still held, by order of General Greene, and that arrangements were making to repel the threatened attack. Late though it was for him to take any steps, under this unexpected condition of affairs, he made hasty preparations to save the garrison, but this proved to be impossible; the position was assaulted on the 16th of November by the British in great force, and, in spite of a gallant resistance, the fort was captured and the garrison were made prisoners of war. This was the heaviest loss the American army had ever suffered; it was disastrous at that moment especially, when all its resources were terribly reduced and when General Washington was not in a position to spare a single man from his ranks. It deprived him at one stroke of twenty-six hundred excellent troops, with all their equipment, and led to the surprise of General Greene by the British, four days later, at Fort Lee, on the narrow strip of high land between the Hudson River and the Hackensack, whence that general was enabled only by a precipitate retreat to save his men, at the expense of their blankets and baggage, a great store of provisions, their tents left standing in the hurry to get away, and nearly all his cannon.

At this point began General Washington's memorable retreat through New Jersey. Immediately after the capture of Fort Lee, his army was drawn up between the Hackensack River and the Passaic, where he was unable to dispute his ground or to protect himself against the extreme dangers which threatened him. He was in a

level country, without an intrenching tool of any kind, at the head of a body of about three thousand effective men, who had no tents to protect them against the rigors of the winter season now coming on, and in a section whose inhabitants were not only not friendly to him, but many of them actually hostile. Added to the other difficulties that were increasing about him to make his situation desperate, was the lamentable result of short enlistments, of the militia as well as of the Continental troops, which made itself felt in the steady melting away of his forces; the men returned home as their terms expired, sometimes even without waiting to be mustered out, while, of the few not yet absolutely entitled to retire from the field, a large proportion had been engaged to stay only until the 1st of January, and there was no hope of retaining them in the service after that.

In the mean time Lord Cornwallis had been ordered to the command of the British forces about to undertake the invasion of New Jersey, and he was now moving upon Washington in a direction which threatened to cut the latter off between the two rivers. General Washington retired across the Passaic on the 21st of November, being totally unable to defend himself, and took up a position at Newark, his rear-guard having destroyed the bridge just as the head of Cornwallis's dragoons and grenadiers came up. From Newark General Washington sent an earnest appeal to Congress and to the State of Pennsylvania, as well as to the Governor of New Jersey, setting forth the dire necessities of the country and begging them to support him by new enlistments and by calling out the militia, in order to prevent the enemy from overrunning New Jersey and advancing immediately to the investment of Philadelphia. Then, after having maintained himself for five days in Newark, he retreated still farther, in the face of Lord Cornwallis's army, which was crossing the Passaic River, and took

up his post upon the Raritan, at Brunswick, on the 28th of November.

Whilst Washington was sharply censured in the criticisms of the time for not checking the enemy and for not doing what it would have been difficult to do even if he had commanded a well-equipped and well-disciplined force, his present weakness was constantly increasing, and he had the mortification, on the 30th of November, of seeing a large part of his remaining army, then entitled to discharge, abandon him almost in the very face of the advancing enemy.[1] He had written, a few days before this, to his brother, in bitter distress, "I am wearied almost to death with the retrograde motion of things."[2] Yet the courage of this extraordinary man never wavered; his mind possessed an elasticity which enabled him to adjust it to the immediate comprehension of almost any conceivable set of circumstances; and, whilst his soldiers about him saw nothing but the serene countenance to which they were accustomed, he kept his few troops in motion in order to conceal his weakness from the enemy, he devised the plans that were necessary for his future operations, and, with entire self-possession, he wrote communications to his general officers, to the Governors and Legislatures of several States, and to Congress.[3]

At Brunswick he kept up the appearance of military strength as long as he was able, always with the purpose of delaying the enemy and wasting their time, until the advance-guard of Cornwallis actually came in view and forced him from the town. Continuing his retreat, in the same general direction, along the route of the great

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[1] Marshall, Life of Washington, ii. 523.

[2] To John Augustine Washington, 19th November, 1776: Sparks, Writings of Washington, iv. 182.

[3] See Washington's Letters, November and December, 1776: Sparks, Writings of Washington, vol. iv.

modern avenue of traffic to-day between the cities of New York and Philadelphia, Washington retired from Brunswick on the 1st of December, with less than three thousand half-clothed men, to Princeton, and thence to Trenton, where he arrived on the 2d of the month. At this moment Lord Howe and his brother the general, as commissioners of the Crown, issued a proclamation commanding all persons assembled in arms against His Majesty to disband, and offering a full pardon to every person who should submit and claim the benefits of the proclamation within sixty days; and great numbers of people flocked in every day to make their peace and to claim protection. Indeed, "the contrast between the splendid appearance of the pursuing army, and that made by the ragged Americans who were flying before them, diminished in numbers, and destitute of almost every necessary, could not fail to contribute to the general opinion that the contest was approaching its termination."[1]

General Washington had left a detachment at Princeton, to make head against the enemy, with the intention, after having transferred his baggage and stores across the Delaware at Trenton, of going back to Princeton and offering such resistance as he could. But upon his way thither he met his troops retiring before the superior force of Cornwallis, who, as if not already sufficiently strong to crush the small remnant fleeing before him, had been reinforced by a brigade of fresh troops and was joined by General Howe himself. Washington hastened back, therefore, with his whole army, to Trenton, and there crossed the Delaware River, on the 8th of December. "Who can tell what might have happened," says the historian,[2] "if Howe had pushed forward four thousand men by a forced march in pursuit of the Amer-

[1] Marshall, Life of Washington, ii. 526.

[2] Bancroft, History of the United States, ix. 202.

icans?" It is perhaps not impossible to imagine what would have happened. There was very little strength left to resist him if he had done so. The wonder is that he did not. This was the lowest ebb of American independence. Nevertheless, those weary, ragged, barefooted, strong-hearted men were destined to preserve the liberty of their country.

Before retiring across the Delaware, General Washington had destroyed all the bridges along the country roads in the neighborhood of Trenton, and had collected, in security from the enemy, all the boats within a distance of seventy miles up and down the stream; in addition to this, he posted his troops in such a manner as to guard as well as he could the different points at which it was fordable. As his rear-guard crossed the river, the van of the British army came in sight, the main body of the enemy taking up its position at Trenton. But, singularly enough, at this point, when the Americans were driven almost to desperation and were upon the verge of total defeat, the British commander distributed his army, part along the Delaware from Trenton to Bordentown and Burlington, and the remainder at different points to the eastward in New Jersey, with the determination of closing the campaign by going into winter quarters. Misled by his expectation that the American army would dwindle away through the expiration of the limited terms of enlistment, well known to be now drawing to their close, General Howe considered it unnecessary to endure any longer the exposure to the rigors of the season, which were growing daily more severe, and indulged himself in the belief that it would be a comparatively easy matter to put an end to the war by a short campaign early in the following spring.

Lord Cornwallis returned to New York, where he was about to go aboard the packet which was to take him to England upon leave. General Howe was preparing to

celebrate with splendid festivities the honors conferred upon him by King George, and his investiture with the Order of the Bath as a reward for his victory upon Long Island. On the opposite side of the Delaware, Washington, to whom all this seemed incomprehensible, did not at first believe that it was the intention of the British to close the campaign, in view of the advantages they already held and of his own enfeebled condition, but suspected it to be merely a mask to conceal a purpose on the part of General Howe to wait a short time until the Delaware should be frozen over, when he could cross his army upon the ice and proceed at once to Philadelphia. Fearing the effect upon the country of further reverses to the American arms and the discouragement that must follow from the loss of so important a city as Philadelphia, General Washington redoubled his appeals, especially to Pennsylvania and to Congress, for more men; and he employed every possible means to strengthen himself, not only in readiness to repel an attack, but even to prepare for offensive operations. His solemn words of warning aroused the people of Pennsylvania to a supreme effort, and fifteen hundred men marched to his relief from Philadelphia to Trenton, in addition to a German battalion ordered thither by Congress; with whom, and with all the New England troops who could be spared from the defence of the north to join him in this extremity, he had concentrated along the Delaware something like five thousand men, to guard the crossings and to harass the enemy by small parties whenever an opportunity should occur.

The protection of Philadelphia became now a subject of the greatest importance, to which all else was necessarily subordinated,—not so much because of the intrinsic value of the city in a military sense, as because Congress was on the point of recruiting an army upon a firmer footing and for a longer term than heretofore, and the

loss of Philadelphia was greatly dreaded, "when that army was to be recruited on which the future hopes of America were to rest, and which was to decide her destiny. It was feared, and with much reason, that this event would make so unfavorable an impression on the public mind as to deter the American youth from engaging in a contest becoming so desperate."[1] The genius of Washington rendered a service to the country at that moment quite as great as that of any single act he performed during the war, and it produced a result the importance of which, in its immediate effect upon the American cause and its bearing upon the ultimate achievement of the independence of the United States, can scarcely be overestimated. He conceived the daring plan of surprising the British and of attacking them in their camps at Trenton and along the Delaware, by a concerted action in which the several detachments of his army were to cross unobserved and make an assault upon the different posts at the same instant.

The cold was intense, and it was snowing, on the night of Christmas, which was selected as the time for this movement; the river was so full of ice that it was extremely difficult to cross; and to take the artillery over required the utmost labor. Nevertheless, Washington did not hesitate. The attack upon the post at Trenton was to be made by a body of a little over two thousand men, all he could muster from his weakened following, and this was to be led by the General himself. Starting out in the afternoon of the 25th, he proceeded, according to the plan agreed upon, to MacKonkey's Ferry, now called Washington's Crossing, where it was expected to transfer the men and the cannon by midnight, after which they were to proceed upon their march of nine miles to Trenton and attack the garrison early in the morning. It was about

[1] Marshall, Life of Washington, ii. 540.

three o'clock in the morning before they were all over, and it took them some time to form on the other bank; after which they set out for their destination in a furious gale of wind and snow, to assault at the end of a long march an enemy who were fresh and well equipped for a fight.

General Washington placed himself at the head of his men, and they all pushed on in the teeth of the storm, until they were well in the town of Trenton at daylight. The garrison was composed of a detachment of Hessians, under Colonel Rall. They were completely surprised: in the midst of a furious attack made upon them by Washington before they had time to form themselves, their commander was mortally wounded; and in less than forty minutes from the first alarm they were overcome and forced to surrender. Nine hundred and forty-six men gave themselves up as prisoners of war to General Washington, who captured with them twelve hundred small-arms, six cannon, and all the standards of the brigade. He had been entirely successful in carrying out his part of the attack; and, although the other detachments which were to operate with him failed of their purpose by reason of the heavy flow of ice in the river, which made it impossible for them to cross, Washington had gained his point. He had taken a step which not only revived the drooping courage of the people about him, whose country had been overrun by a victorious enemy and was now held apparently without hope of release, but also taught the lesson that the American army, destitute though it was, could still make head against its adversary, in the cause of freedom; and it renewed confidence throughout the United States both in their General and in the ultimate result of their struggle. There was yet much hardship, there were many bitter trials, in store for the Americans, before the war should be ended, but this little battle had turned the ebbing tide.

If the whole of the concerted plan had been carried out, and the rest of his troops had been able to join him at Trenton, as he had expected, General Washington would have moved at once against the enemy, in the hope of breaking all their posts, and of afterward maintaining his position once more in New Jersey. But this now was impossible, and he hastened, before the British could be massed against him, to recross the Delaware River. Encumbered as he was with nearly a thousand prisoners and with all the captured baggage and equipment, he marched back to the ferry on the 26th of December, in the driving storm which still continued, and safely transferred his tired and almost frozen men to the Pennsylvania side.

The news of the battle of Trenton was received with amazement by the British leaders. General Howe determined to resume active operations, in spite of the winter season; and Lord Cornwallis, having abandoned his visit to England, returned to the army in New Jersey, and concentrated a very large force at Princeton, where he protected himself by hastily constructed works. On the 2d of January, Cornwallis advanced from Princeton against the army of Washington, who had again crossed the Delaware, on the 30th of December, and had taken a position at Trenton. The superior force of the British at this moment threatened the destruction of the Americans and placed General Washington in an extremely critical situation. Another retreat across the Delaware, to say nothing of the difficulties attending such a movement, by reason of the ice,—which formed an almost impassable barrier but was at no place strong enough to bear the weight of marching upon it,—would have been tantamount to the evacuation of New Jersey, and such an acknowledgment of defeat as would have destroyed the influence upon the country of the victory just gained at Trenton; and yet to hold out in the

face of Cornwallis with the hastily collected body of five thousand men, most of them totally unacquainted with war, of whom Washington was now able to dispose, would have been certain ruin. But here again the fortitude of Washington seems only to have been increased by the presence of imminent danger, and with mature wisdom and unerring judgment he determined upon the course he was to pursue. The very boldness of his decision enabled him to carry it out; for, although he had surpassed all imagination by his attack upon Trenton and had shown the British that he was a desperate fighter who was never beaten whilst he had a single resource, surely, under his present circumstances, there was nothing to lead Lord Cornwallis to expect from him any further offensive operations, when it was not even likely that he would be able to sustain himself until the following day. And yet, in spite of this discouraging situation, Washington succeeded in making another daring attack upon the British. He had drawn up his army along the Assanpink, a small creek which ran through the town of Trenton, where he was awaiting the advance of Cornwallis, who now approached in force, but who was not likely to cross the creek immediately, because the Americans had so disposed themselves that all the fords were guarded. This gave Washington an opportunity to prepare the movement which he subsequently carried out, for the British, after having made one or two ineffectual attempts to cross the Assanpink Creek, sat down for the night and lighted their camp-fires,—the fires of the Americans burning brightly, in the mean time, upon the other side.

The plan conceived by General Washington was to slip away quietly at night from the front of Cornwallis, and, by a rapid movement, to gain his rear and assault the garrison at Princeton, which he knew to be held by a small detachment of the enemy, the main forces having

been concentrated in the advance upon Trenton; and, if he were successful in this first attempt, then to push on quickly to Brunswick, where the principal magazines and the treasure-box lay, under a weak guard, and to make an attack upon that post. If he succeeded in this he would call back Cornwallis to his own defence in the rear, Philadelphia would be relieved from danger, for the present at least, and nearly all of New Jersey would be recovered from the enemy. If he failed, the worst that could happen was that Philadelphia would fall into the hands of Cornwallis, which it was sure to do at all events if the American army were forced to retreat farther inland before him.

The enemy was completely deceived by the apparent quiet in the American camp, and the British officers, having placed their sentries as usual, lay down to sleep, confident that upon the next day they should bear down upon Washington with such superior weight that he must necessarily succumb, and hoping by this move to close the war. But the situation was very different in Washington's camp. As soon as it grew dark he began to remove his baggage to a place of security, and about midnight he moved away with his soldiers so secretly that the British outposts saw nothing and heard nothing; the American camp-fires were burning all night along the Assanpink, because Washington had left a few men behind to put wood upon them and to keep them bright, and the British sentries were sure that all was right because they saw American sentries moving up and down throughout the watches of the night and early morning.

In the mean time, Washington was well on his way. He had taken a roundabout road to pass beyond the British flank, and by sunrise on the 3d of January was at Princeton, where he immediately began an attack upon the British regiments in the garrison, which resulted, after a very short engagement, in the retreat of the enemy,

leaving him in possession of the town with nearly three hundred prisoners of war. At Trenton, Lord Cornwallis was astonished in the morning to see nothing of the Americans, but very soon the sound of their cannon came from the direction of Princeton to indicate to him where they had gone; and in an instant the movement flashed upon his mind, filling him with consternation lest he should have been outdone and the extremely valuable magazines at Brunswick should be captured. He broke up his camp with all possible speed, and started for Brunswick for the purpose of protecting that post if it were not already too late. He accomplished that object, because General Washington had not been able with his exhausted troops to carry out the whole of his plan, many of his soldiers being without shoes and stockings, most of them wretchedly clad, and all having been exposed without shelter to the winter weather during his recent fatiguing movements in New Jersey. Therefore, just as the British were coming in sight of Princeton, Washington moved out of the town, and, breaking down the bridges over the small streams which he crossed upon his way, turned toward the wooded country and the highlands, where his men found temporary shelter, and on the 5th of the month he took up his head-quarters at Morristown.

The fighting was now over for the winter. The cause of Independence was still alive. What the following campaign should bring could not be foretold; the prospect was gloomy enough; but the valor of General Washington awakened new hope throughout the land, his splendid leadership had driven the enemy back, and on the side of the British the results of this year's campaign were practically nothing. They held posts in New Jersey at Amboy and Brunswick and at Paulus Hook, but the greater part of the State was free. New England was intact except the little island of Rhode Island; the great territory of New York State, except Fort Niagara, was

out of their control; and they had no footing in the whole of the Southern States from Delaware to Florida. Sir William Howe retired to his quarters in New York City, where and in the adjacent islands his authority still was undisputed, to pass his time agreeably, to wait for the pleasant weather of spring, and to add to his troops by the reinforcements which he had asked for from England, and which the Government was making strenuous efforts to get ready for him. Although it began to be felt in England, after the incidents at Trenton and at Princeton, that Sir William Howe was not prosecuting the war with the energy that had been expected of him, and that he ought to be replaced by a more enterprising commander, he was protected against this criticism by the favor of the King, who would not assent to his removal, and he was left in New York to waste his time and to give the Americans an opportunity to prepare for the campaign of the following year. He was not granted all the reinforcements that he had asked for at the close of hostilities, but his already superior army was further strengthened by the addition of new levies in England and Ireland and new purchases of troops in Germany, to the extent of some three thousand men. The ministry insisted that he would be able to end the war in a year with what he had; and with exceeding bitterness of spirit against the Americans, Lord George Germain wrote to Lord Howe and to Sir William Howe, "It will be incumbent upon you to use the powers with which you are intrusted in such a manner that those persons who shall have shown themselves undeserving of the royal mercy may not escape that punishment which is due to their crimes, and which it will be expedient to inflict for the sake of example to futurity."

Washington was still holding his position in New Jersey with a force of which the whole number fit for duty did not exceed three thousand men. Many of these were en-

gaged for only a few months. The treasury was empty, the government of Congress was lamentably deficient, the recruiting service brought in soldiers very slowly in spite of stupendous efforts on the part of the Commander-in-Chief and the critical condition of the country's affairs. No adversary could have presented a more slender defence at that moment, if the British had seized the opportunity so plainly offered by this inherent weakness. It was not a campaign of British energy, however, fortunately for the American cause. Sir William Howe virtually did nothing until the middle of the following summer, that of 1777; and he then changed his plan of campaign once more by deciding to give up the attempt in New Jersey and to proceed against Philadelphia by sea.

General Washington remained at Morristown, practically undisturbed, until the end of May, when he moved his army, now increased to between seven and eight thousand men, to the higher ground and more advantageous position of Middlebrook, on the north side of the Raritan, in New Jersey, about fifteen miles north of Princeton and some nine miles from Brunswick. Toward the middle of June the British again made a demonstration in New Jersey, proceeding to Brunswick with a splendidly disciplined and perfectly equipped army of seventeen thousand men, the like of which the veteran officers, both German and English, declared they had never seen before. Since they were furnished with boats and pontoon bridges, it seemed evident that General Howe's intention was to cut Washington off from Princeton by a rapid march and to cross the Delaware River. Washington disposed his troops, as well as his resources would allow him, to prevent this movement, and on the 14th of June the two armies confronted each other. But General Howe could not decide even then to make an attack, in spite of his superiority of two to one; and a few days later, on the 19th, he retired with the whole British force to Brunswick,

and afterward to Amboy. After some desultory movements which produced no result, on the 30th of June he evacuated New Jersey, which he never saw again. One is led almost irresistibly to the belief that General Howe was absolutely indifferent to his success in this war. His efforts never went beyond the point of moderate difficulty; he sacrificed his military prestige in a series of unmanly failures, which nothing could have accounted for in the case of a soldier interested in his work.

Instead of seizing now an opportunity to move up the Hudson River in force and to occupy the highlands, so as to be in readiness to support General Burgoyne, who was marching southward from Canada for the purpose of capturing Albany and uniting the British armies in a continuous line north and south so as to cut off New England from the Middle States, Sir William Howe embarked his whole army in the harbor of New York, except such troops as were immediately necessary to defend the posts, and, with a fleet of nearly three hundred vessels, dropped down to Sandy Hook on the 23d of July, and sailed away.

But the seizure of the highlands in New York, with the consequent control of the Hudson River, was so much in the mind of General Washington, this having been the one movement of the British which he had feared the most, that it seemed improbable to him that Sir William Howe would abandon it at this moment, or that, especially in view of the continued approach of General Burgoyne from the north, the British commander would turn away from a course for which the military reasons were at that time so obvious. He feared that the fleet had put out to sea only in order to mislead him, that if he moved from his strong position at Middlebrook he should expose himself to an attack in case it suddenly returned, and that this was a feint intended to dislodge him, in order that, being set upon by a vastly superior force, he might be destroyed.

In perfect self-possession, Washington held his camp at Middlebrook, whilst he took the necessary steps to watch the movements of the enemy, to throw his forces against them on the Hudson if they reappeared, or to move toward the south if their designs lay in that direction.

His anxiety was finally relieved by the news that the British fleet had appeared off the capes of the Delaware on the 30th of July. He then formed his army into two columns and marched to Philadelphia.

It was at this time that the Marquis de La Fayette had arrived in America and was making his way northward to present himself to Congress and to enter the Continental army. Having set out from Charleston, as we have already seen, on the 25th of June, he had reached Philadelphia on the 27th of July, only a few days before the British fleet appeared in the Delaware and the American commander moved his army into Pennsylvania. It was whilst La Fayette was in Philadelphia that he saw for the first time General Washington, for whom he conceived at once an attachment which was returned by the General in the most kindly expressions of sympathy and good will, and this meeting gave rise to a friendship that united them in affectionate intercourse during the remainder of their lives. General Washington was at a dinner in Philadelphia, when the young Marquis, who was also a guest, first caught sight of him, "and, though he was surrounded by officers and private citizens, the majesty of his countenance and of his figure made it impossible not to recognize him; he was especially distinguished also by the affability of his manners and the dignity with which he addressed those about him."[1] When they were about to separate, Washington took La Fayette aside, spoke to him very kindly, complimented him upon the noble spirit he had shown and the sacrifices

[1] Mémoires de ma Main, i. 20.

he had made in favor of the American cause, and then told him that he should be pleased if he would make the quarters of the Commander-in-Chief his home, establish himself there whenever he thought proper, and consider himself at all times as one of his family; adding, in a tone of pleasantry, that he could not promise him the luxuries of a court, or even the conveniences which his former habits might have rendered essential to his comfort, but that, since he had become an American soldier, he would doubtless contrive to accommodate himself to the character he had assumed, and would submit with a good grace to the customs, manners, and privations of a republican army. La Fayette's joy at his success with Congress was redoubled by this flattering proof of friendship and regard on the part of the Commander-in-Chief. His horses and equipage were immediately sent to camp, and ever afterward, even when he had the command of a division, he kept up his intimacy at head-quarters, and enjoyed all the advantages of a member of the General's family. The day after the dinner, Washington inspected the fortifications in the Delaware River, and invited La Fayette to accompany him.[1]

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[1] Sparks, Writings of Washington, v. 454.

CHAPTER VII.

LA FAYETTE'S FIRST SERVICE IN THE CONTINENTAL ARMY —BRANDYWINE AND GLOUCESTER.

When the Marquis de La Fayette first saw General Washington, in Philadelphia, about the 1st of August, 1777, the American army was encamped some five miles north of the city, between Germantown and the Schuylkill River, upon an eminence not far from the intersection of School House Lane with the Township Line,—the present Wissahickon Avenue.[1] The British fleet having withdrawn from the capes of the Delaware and having put to sea again shortly after its appearance there upon the 30th of July, because, as it afterward proved, the admiral concluded that he should not be able to pass the obstructions in the Delaware River so as to approach Philadelphia, General Washington was left in very serious doubt as to the course he should pursue. His uncertainty was greatly increased, and his anxiety aroused, as day after day passed and nothing was heard of General Howe. At the end of the first week in August, whilst he was "yet entirely in the dark as to the destination of the enemy,"[2] and time enough having elapsed for the fleet to make its appearance in Chesapeake Bay, if that were its destination, or to return to New York, the Commander-in-Chief began to fear that the purpose of the British lay to the eastward; and he decided to prepare for their appearance in that direction by moving his troops toward New Jer-

[1] Baker, The Camp by Schuylkill Falls, p. 1.

[2] Washington to General Putnam, 7th August, 1777: Sparks, Writings of Washington, v. 23.

sey and by crossing the Delaware again,[1] with the view of approaching the country of the Hudson River. He set out, therefore, on the 8th of August; but two days later he was overtaken by an express from Philadelphia announcing that the British fleet had been seen, on the 7th of the month, off Sinepuxent Inlet, to the southward of the capes of the Delaware. He halted immediately, and went into camp on the Old York Road, near the Neshaminy Creek, about half a mile above the present village of Hartsville, in Bucks County, Pennsylvania.[2]

It was there that La Fayette joined the army, as a volunteer, in the month of August, about a week after he had written his letter of thanks to Congress for the commission they had granted him, which we have seen above. What he saw there, upon his arrival at head-quarters, is thus described by him in referring to it long afterward:[3] "About eleven thousand men rather poorly armed, and much worse clad, presented a singular appearance. In the midst of a great variety of clothing, sometimes even of nakedness, the best garments were a sort of hunting-shirts, loose jackets made of gray linen, very common in Carolina. As for their tactics, it is enough to say that when in the line of battle it became necessary for a regiment to assume a position to the right without breaking ranks, instead of filing simply to the right, the left began a never-ending countermarch. They were always drawn up in two ranks, the small men in the front; but with this exception there was no distinction made as to size. In spite of these disadvantages, however, they were fine soldiers and led by zealous officers. Bravery took the place with them of science, and every day improved their experience and their discipline." Upon the arrival in

[1] To General Putnam, 11th August, 1777: Sparks, Writings of Washington, v. 26.

[2] Baker, The Camp by Schuylkill Falls, p. 10.

[3] Mémoires de ma Main, i. 20.

camp of this spirited young foreign soldier, Washington said, by way of compliment, "It is somewhat embarrassing to us to show ourselves to an officer who has just come from the army of France," to which La Fayette quickly replied, "I am here to learn, and not to teach;" an answer so different in tone from what was usual among the Europeans then in the American army that it gave general satisfaction and made friends for him at once.[1]

While the Marquis de La Fayette had obtained a commission from Congress as major-general, with the understanding that he should serve for the present, at least, as a volunteer and without command, his ambition was very strong, no doubt, to attain and to deserve the full authority of an officer in accordance with his rank. He appears to have understood perfectly his relations at that time to the service, yet in his eagerness to make himself in every respect an American soldier and to identify himself as such with the Continental army it is likely that he expressed to the Commander-in-Chief, who, though favorably impressed by his manners in Philadelphia, knew him then but very slightly, such hopefulness as to his future as to leave a doubt in the mind of Washington what Congress intended him to do in the case of La Fayette in the matter of an active command, when the latter should join the army. Upon the very delicate subject of foreign officers in America, which had already given rise to serious difficulties, General Washington had expressed much solicitude in his letters to Congress, as we have seen; and now the expected arrival at his head-quarters of the Marquis de La Fayette appears to have caused him some apprehension lest it might lead to further embarrassment. He wrote, therefore, in this connection to a gentleman in Congress,[2]—

[1] Mémoires de ma Main, i. 21.

[2] To Benjamin Harrison, from Neshaminy Bridge, 19th August, 1777: Sparks, Writings of Washington, v. 35.

"If I did not misunderstand what you or some other member of Congress said to me, respecting the appointment of the Marquis de Lafayette, he has misconceived the design of his appointment, or Congress did not understand the extent of his views; for certain it is, that I understood him, that he does not conceive his commission is merely honorary, but given with a view to command a division of this army. It is true he has said, that he is young and inexperienced, but at the same time has always accompanied it with a hint, that, so soon as I shall think him fit for the command of a division, he shall be ready to enter upon the duties of it, and in the mean time has offered his service for a smaller command. What the designs of Congress respecting this gentleman were, and what line of conduct I am to pursue to comply with their design and his expectations, I know not, and beg to be instructed. If Congress meant, that his rank should be unaccompanied by command, I wish it had been sufficiently explained to him. If, on the other hand, it was intended to invest him with all the powers of a major-general, why have I been led into a contrary belief, and left in the dark with respect to my own conduct towards him? . . .

"I was going to address Congress for instructions in the case of the Marquis de Lafayette, but upon second thought concluded to ask some direction of my conduct in this matter through a member, and therefore have imposed this task upon you. Let me beseech you then, my good Sir, to give me the sentiments of Congress on this matter, that I may endeavour, as far as it is in my power, to comply with them. . . . The Marquis is now in Philadelphia, but expected up this day or to-morrow."

Mr. Harrison's reply to this letter gave the General to understand that the appointment was merely an honorary one for the present, and that he was not bound by the tenor of the commission to give him a command, but was to follow his own judgment and discretion in the matter. The question was one which very quickly freed itself from difficulty in the sequel; for, during the campaign which was then just opening, La Fayette won favor in the army by distinguished bravery and by the display of very considerable military skill, so that before the end of it General Washington assigned to him, with the approval of Congress, the division he so greatly longed for.

La Fayette arrived at the Neshaminy camp the day after General Washington had written to Mr. Harrison, and upon the following day, the 21st of August, he was present at the council of war which had been summoned by the Commander-in-Chief to discuss the situation and to consider the advisability of moving the troops. This was the first council of war that La Fayette attended in America, and upon this occasion he bore the rank of major-general in the service of the United States.[1]

In the absence of information as to the whereabouts of the British fleet, the council of war decided, as the unanimous opinion of the general officers present, that the enemy must have sailed for Charleston; for if they had gone to Chesapeake Bay they would have been there long since and the fact would have been well established; besides, there was no place short of Charleston of sufficient importance to engage their attention. In view of this conclusion, since it was not deemed expedient to transport the army to so distant a point as South Carolina, where it could not hope to arrive in time to perform any service, the decision was taken to advance immediately toward the Hudson River. But, news having been received by Congress that the fleet had reappeared, President Hancock wrote, on the 22d of August, to General Washington, "This moment an express arrived from Maryland with an account of near two hundred sail of General Howe's fleet being at anchor in the Chesapeake Bay. In consequence of this advice, Congress have ordered the immediate removal of the stores and prisoners from Lancaster and York in this State to places of greater safety."

This fixed at once the purpose of the Commander-in-Chief. Upon the following day he turned his army toward Philadelphia, and, marching down the Old York

[1] Washington's letter to the President of Congress: Sparks, Writings of Washington, v. 38, and note on page 41.

Road, encamped a few miles north of the city, near Germantown, he himself occupying with his staff, as his head-quarters for the night, "Stenton," the fine old seat of the Logan family, which is still standing. From this point he made preparations to pass through the city the next morning, the 24th of August; for he had in mind the purpose of showing his troops to the people there, in order to encourage the friends of liberty by the spirit and bearing of its defenders, and to counteract any feeling of disaffection that might have arisen from the near approach of the enemy's threatening force.[1] From Stenton he issued the general order that

"The army is to march in one column through the city of Philadelphia, going in at and marching down Front Street to Chestnut, and up Chestnut to the Common. A small halt is to be made about a mile this side of the city until the rear is clear up and the line in proper order. . . . The drums and fifes of each brigade are to be collected in the centre of it, and a tune for the quick-step played, but with such moderation that the men may step to it with ease, and without *dancing* along, or totally disregarding the music, as has been too often the case." [2]

La Fayette, who rode by the side of Washington through the city, says that the General was very handsome at the head of his troops, and that with sprigs of green in their hats, stepping to the music of the fife and the drum, in the presence of all the citizens, these soldiers, in spite of their nakedness, presented a creditable appearance.[3] After passing through Philadelphia the army advanced without delay to Chester.

In the mean while, the British commander was approaching from the south through Chesapeake Bay; having met with no opposition, he sailed up to the Elk

[1] Washington to the President of Congress, 23d August, 1777: Sparks, Writings of Washington, v. 43.

[2] Saffell, Records of the Revolutionary War, pp. 333–336.

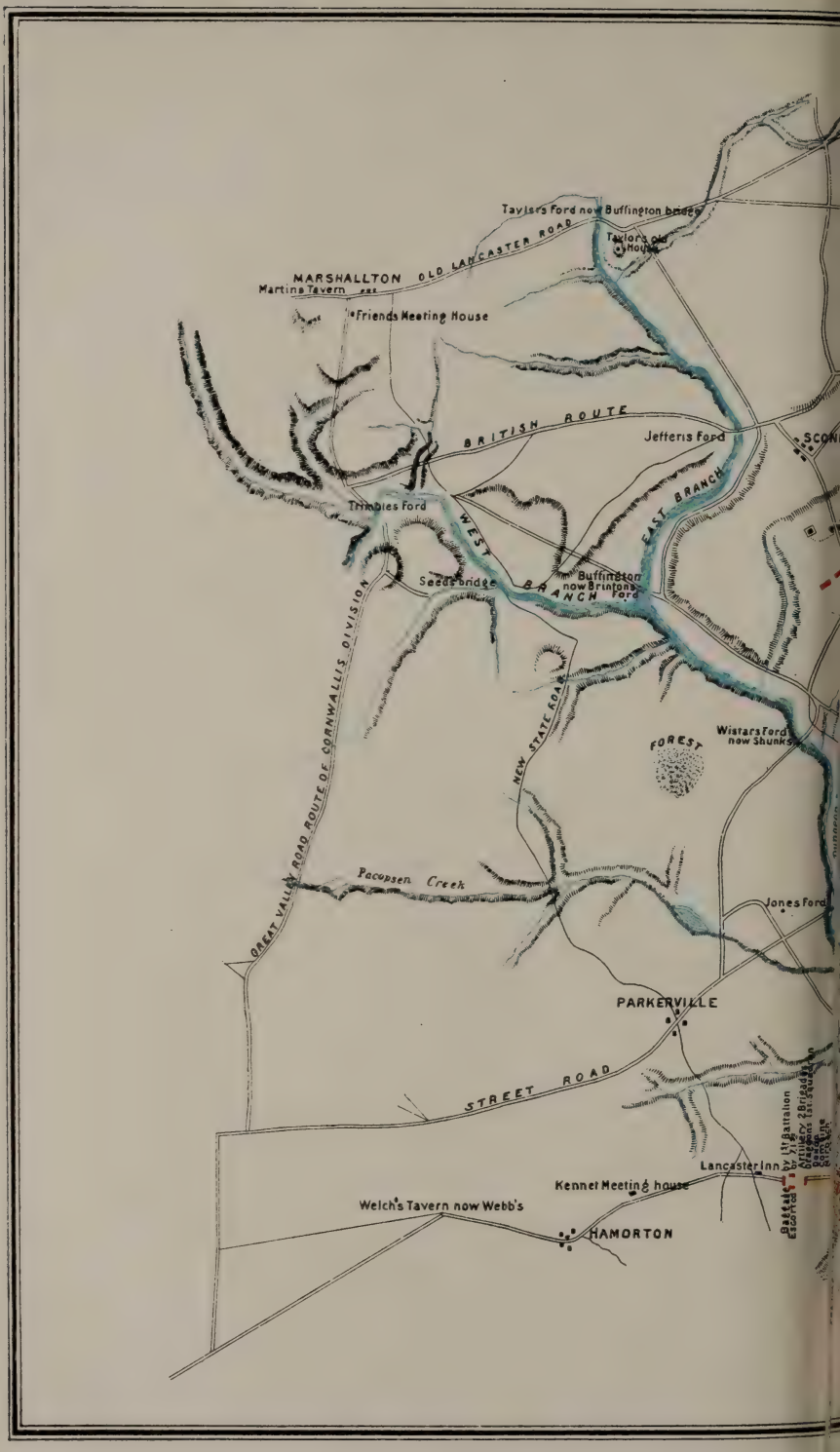
[3] Mémoires de ma Main, i. 21.

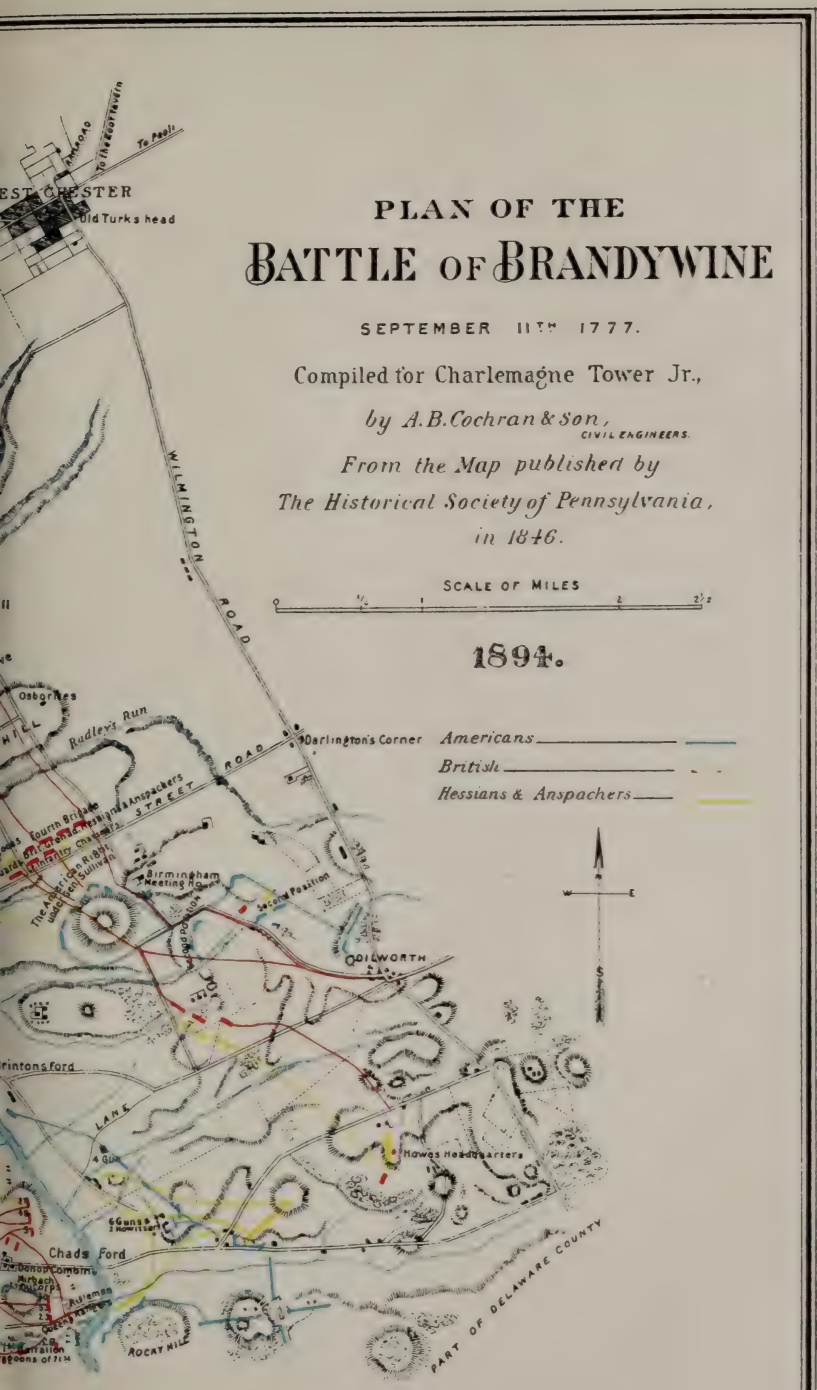
River, at the extreme northern end of the Chesapeake, and made a landing on the 25th of August, near "the Head of Elk," now Elkton, in Maryland, upon the present line of the Philadelphia, Wilmington and Baltimore Railway. He was at the head of an army of eighteen thousand veteran troops, who landed from their voyage in excellent condition, who were thoroughly supplied with all the best equipments of war known at that day, and who were commanded, under him, by Lieutenant-General the Earl Cornwallis and Lieutenant-General Knyphausen, officers of long experience and of unquestioned military skill. His attitude was at that moment extremely threatening. He was but about fifty miles from Philadelphia, the objective point of his expedition, in a country which presented no serious natural obstructions to his progress, and which was not intersected by any streams that were not easily passable.

The American army was in front of him to dispute his passage. But the contest was an unequal one. General Washington's forces had been increased by the militia of Pennsylvania, by volunteers, and by the division of General Sullivan, who had recently joined him, to some fifteen thousand men; though of these, by reason of illness, lack of clothing, and very defective arms, the number of really serviceable troops was only between eleven and twelve thousand.

Determined, however, to make a stand against the enemy, the Commander-in-Chief had advanced to the hills beyond Wilmington, when, on the 3d of September, the British army began its march toward Philadelphia. After one or two skirmishes between the head of the British columns and the advanced posts of the American army, Washington's main body lay, on the 7th of September, at a little village called Newport, in Delaware,[1]

[1] Washington to General Heath, 7th September, 1777: Sparks, Writings of Washington, v. 55.


Taylor's Ford now Buffington Bridge
Taylor's old House
MARSHALLTON
OLD LANCASTER ROAD
Martins Tavern
Friends Meeting House
BRITISH ROUTE
Jefferis Ford
Trimbles Ford
WEST BRANCH
EAST BRANCH
Seeds Bridge
Buffington now Brintons Ford
NEW STATE ROAD
GREAT VALLEY ROAD ROUTE OF CORNWALLIS'S DIVISION
FOREST
Wistars Ford now Shanks
Pocopsen Creek
Jones Ford
PARKERVILLE
STREET ROAD
Lancaster Inn
Kennet Meeting house
Welch's Tavern now Webb's
HAMORTON


PLAN OF THE
BATTLE OF BRANDYWINE
SEPTEMBER 11TH 1777.
Compiled for Charlemagne Tower Jr.,
by A.B.Cochran & Son, CIVIL ENGINEERS.
From the Map published by
The Historical Society of Pennsylvania,
in 1846.
SCALE OF MILES
1894.
Americans
British
Hessians & Anspachers
WILMINGTON ROAD
Darlington's Corner
Radley's Run
Birmingham Meeting House
Second Position
DILWORTH
Howes Head Quarters
Chads Ford
Osbornes
Fourth Bridge
STREET
LANE
ROCKY HILL
PART OF DELAWARE COUNTY
To Philadelphia
Old Turks head

upon which place General Howe advanced two days later in force, as if to make an attack, until he had reached a point two miles distant from the post. He did not make an attack, however, which aroused the suspicion of General Washington as to his real purpose, and, as he said,[1] "Upon reconnoitring their situation, it appeared probable that they only meant to amuse us in front, while their real intent was to march by our right, and, by suddenly passing the Brandywine and gaining the heights upon the north side of that river, get between us and Philadelphia, and cut us off from that city. To prevent this, it was judged expedient to change our position immediately." Accordingly, General Washington moved his army back, at two o'clock in the morning of the 9th of September, and crossed the Brandywine at Chadd's Ford toward the evening of that day.

The Brandywine is a very small river made up of the combined waters of two inconsiderable streams, called respectively the East Branch and the West Branch, which flows through a broken and at some points rather hilly country toward the Delaware River, which it enters after uniting with the Christiana Creek somewhat to the north and east of Wilmington, about twenty-five miles below the city of Philadelphia. It is passable, especially in the late summer season, at a number of shallow places which were well known and utilized at the period of the Revolution, among which was Chadd's Ford, where Washington's army intrenched itself on the night of the 9th of September, and which has since become famous from the battle which took place there two days later. The general direction of the stream at Chadd's Ford is, speaking roughly, from north to south. There are several other fords within a few miles, above and below, notably those known as Trimble's Ford on the West Branch and

[1] Washington to the President of Congress, 9th September, 1777 : Sparks, Writings of Washington, v. 56.

Jefferies's Ford on the East Branch, which played a part in the action. The country was at that time thickly covered with forests, though there were numerous roads running through it by which communication was made easy, both from north to south and from east to west. Of these the more important were the main road, which ran east and west and crossed the Brandywine at Chadd's Ford, leading by Welch's Tavern and Kennett Meeting-house; to the north of it, and running in the same direction, at a distance varying from one to two miles, the highway known as the Street Road; at right angles with each of these, to the west of the Brandywine, the Great Valley Road, leading toward the north; on the east side of the Brandywine another, running generally north and south, by Sconneltown, across the Street Road, to the Birmingham Meeting-house; while an avenue leading east and west from Trimble's Ford to Jefferies's Ford closed a rude form of quadrangle about the country through which the Brandywine flows, some six or seven miles to the north of Chadd's Ford; traversed, however, by several by-ways which made any one point within it accessible from the others.

The position taken by General Washington was on the east bank of the Brandywine, where he constructed intrenchments upon the hilly ground directly facing and commanding the passage at Chadd's Ford, and drew up his army along the river, with his right extending toward the north, and his extreme left protected by thickly wooded country to the south of the Ford. Here he remained on the 10th of September, expecting the appearance of the enemy, having thrown out in the mean time an advanced post, consisting of General Maxwell's light infantry, on the opposite, or west, bank of the Brandywine to defend the approaches to the Ford. The Commander-in-Chief established his head-quarters at the house of Benjamin Ring, on the road about one mile east of the

Ford, and the Marquis de La Fayette lodged in a picturesque little house about a quarter of a mile farther to the east, on the same road, belonging to Gideon Gilpin, which is still standing and is known throughout the surrounding country as "La Fayette's Head-Quarters." The right of the American army was commanded by General Sullivan, with six brigades, including those of Lord Stirling and General Stephen. The extreme left, below the Ford, was held by General Armstrong with the Pennsylvania militia. General Wayne's division, with Proctor's artillery, occupied the ground at the Ford. General Greene's division (consisting of the brigades of General Weedon and General Muhlenberg), which was accompanied by the Commander-in-Chief, formed a reserve and took during the battle a central position between the right and the left wing.

Upon the other side of the Brandywine the whole British army, then about seven miles distant, united at Kennett Square, on the 10th of September, and early in the morning of the 11th began its march in two columns, commanded respectively by Lord Cornwallis and General Knyphausen, along the road leading to Chadd's Ford. As soon as this information reached General Washington, shortly after daylight, he put his entire force under arms and prepared to contest the passage of the Brandywine. Soon the outposts under General Maxwell were driven in, after light skirmishes, and the British column under General Knyphausen, consisting of about five thousand men, advanced to Chadd's Ford, where it was drawn up on the heights opposite the American intrenchments, and, opening with its artillery, and making demonstrations of attack, appeared about to undertake the crossing at the Ford. This proved, however, to be merely a feint; for the main force of the British army had gone in another direction. Instead of advancing toward Chadd's Ford with General Knyphausen, Lord Cornwallis, who was

accompanied by General Howe, moved to the north early in the morning with a column of thirteen thousand men and took the Great Valley Road leading to the upper fords of the Brandywine, Trimble's Ford and Jefferies's Ford, with the purpose of turning the position of the Americans, and, while General Knyphausen diverted their attention by his parade at Chadd's Ford, of falling upon their rear and enclosing them between the two divisions of the British army. When this movement should have been accomplished, it was the intention of General Knyphausen to cross the Ford and co-operate by attacking the Americans in front.

The result of this plan was that the action at the battle of the Brandywine consisted of two distinct encounters; the one which took place in the afternoon with Lord Cornwallis's flanking column in the neighborhood of the Birmingham Meeting-house, and that which occurred about the same time with General Knyphausen at Chadd's Ford. Toward mid-day, whilst General Washington was watching the enemy at Chadd's Ford, information reached him that a very large detachment of the British, with many field-pieces, had turned into the Great Valley Road and was marching toward the north in the direction of Trimble's Ford and Jefferies's Ford; it was estimated at about five thousand men by an officer who reported having seen it, and who added that the dust arose behind for a long distance. Believing from this that the enemy had divided his forces, General Washington determined immediately to make an attack upon him; which if it had been carried out without interruption would probably have changed in some very important details the result of the day's work. He directed General Sullivan and Lord Stirling to cross the Brandywine and fall upon the column commanded by Lord Cornwallis in order to keep it in check whilst he himself should cross at Chadd's Ford and assault the division of General

Knyphausen. Unfortunately, word was sent at this critical moment by General Sullivan to the Commander-in-Chief, who received it after he had actually set his troops in motion to execute this manœuvre, that counter-intelligence had been brought to him which led him to believe that the reported movement of the British was only a feint, and that the column of Lord Cornwallis had returned to reunite with that of General Knyphausen; that a major of militia who had left the forks of the Brandywine late in the day assured him there was no appearance of the enemy in that direction, and that some light horse who had been sent out to reconnoitre the road had returned with the same information. In view of this uncertainty, General Washington suspended his movement. During the interval of inactivity which followed these conflicting reports, a reputable citizen of the neighborhood, named Thomas Cheney, familiarly known as "Squire Cheney," rode up in great haste to the headquarters and asked to see the Commander-in-Chief, to whom, upon being admitted after some reluctance on the part of his staff, he announced that the main body of the British army had crossed the Brandywine above and was then coming down on the eastern side so rapidly that if General Washington did not make haste he would be surrounded; whereupon the General replied that according to intelligence which he had recently received as to the movements of the British this statement could not be true. But Squire Cheney exclaimed with great earnestness, "You are mistaken, general; my life for it, you are mistaken. Put me under guard until you find my story true."[1]

Confirmation of it came almost immediately after, in the following despatch sent by General Sullivan to the Commander-in-Chief:

[1] John Hickman, Jr., Esq., in the "Bulletin of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania," September, 1846.

"Two o'clock P.M.

"DEAR GENERAL,—Colonel Bland has this moment sent me word that the enemy are in the rear of my right, about two miles, coming down. There are, he says, about two brigades of them. He also says he saw dust back in the country for above an hour. I am, &c.

"JOHN SULLIVAN."

At that moment the American army was virtually defeated; though it made during the next few hours a gallant resistance. Its stubborn attempt to retrieve its lost fortune resulted, at all events, in a retreat with comparatively small loss in killed and wounded, and with strength enough left to continue the campaign. If the British movement had been carried out to completion, General Washington's forces must have been utterly destroyed. The column under Lord Cornwallis had made a long détour by the Great Valley Road to Trimble's Ford, thence eastward to the passage called Jefferies's Ford, and had already proceeded down the east side of the Brandywine very nearly to the Birmingham Meeting-house. It was then, at about two o'clock in the afternoon, only a short distance from General Sullivan's flank and rear, having completed, since it set out early in the morning, a march of nearly seventeen miles.

The Birmingham Meeting-house, a fine example of the early places of worship of the Society of Friends, and still in excellent preservation, stands upon the high ground in the hills that rise to the east of the Brandywine, about three miles toward the north from the position occupied by General Washington at Chadd's Ford. Looking toward the northwest, in the direction from which Lord Cornwallis was then approaching, the ground about the meeting-house and an adjacent hill upon which was the residence of William Jones commanded a slope extending across cultivated fields where the land fell away gently down to the Street Road below, and afforded an excellent situation from which to repel an attack if time were given

to dispose a force, and if there were anything like equality of strength in the contending armies. Behind it were dense forests, through which the road ran to Dilworthtown and on to Chester; and another road led down the hill, toward the southwest, to Chadd's Ford. Upon the receipt of the news that Cornwallis's forces were at hand, General Sullivan was sent at once with his own division and the brigades of Generals Stirling and Stephen to face them. Hastily moving his column to the right, General Sullivan advanced up the hills and occupied the advantageous position about the Birmingham Meeting-house, from which the enemy were at that time actually in sight. General Wayne remained in the position held by him during the morning, to protect the crossing at Chadd's Ford. General Greene's troops were held between these two divisions, with the purpose of aiding either Sullivan or Wayne as the case might require.

It was at this point that the Marquis de La Fayette performed his first military service in the cause of American independence, displaying a personal devotion in the heat of battle which won distinction for him at once as a soldier, and left him, when the action was ended, one of the heroes of the day. In company with General Washington, he had taken part, as a volunteer, in the movements connected with the crossing of the Brandywine and the disposition of the army at Chadd's Ford, and he was still at head-quarters when the news came of Lord Cornwallis's approach. He saw at a glance that fighting was now about to take place along the right wing, which was sure to be involved almost instantly with the British column; and, in his eagerness to take part, he begged the Commander-in-Chief to allow him to go with General Sullivan to the front.[1] This request was granted, and he set out.

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[1] Mémoires de ma Main, i. 24.

Whilst the American troops were forming upon the brow of the hill in front of the Birmingham Meeting-house, and before the lines were drawn up in order, through a delay caused by a misunderstanding as to the exact positions to be held by the respective commanders, the British opened the action, about half-past four in the afternoon. The Hessians crossed the Street Road, in front of which they had been halted, and, resting their muskets upon the fence, delivered their fire against the American outposts. This was followed by a furious attack from the whole British column, now formed in line of battle, and very shortly afterward the engagement became general. The onset was so severe that the American right began to waver and quickly gave way. This action left the remainder of the line exposed to a galling fire on its flank, which caused it also to break and fall back in great confusion before the British, to the ground behind the meeting-house and along the road leading to Dilworthtown; so that very soon the retreat of General Sullivan's men was degenerating into a panic. La Fayette, seeing this, threw himself from his horse, and, plunging in among the hurrying masses, strove to renew confidence by his voice and by his example, in the hope that a stand might yet be made before the enemy, who were now fast approaching.

By an heroic effort, he succeeded in rallying about himself a number sufficient to check for a moment the headlong flight of the troops, whilst Lord Stirling formed his brigade slightly in the rear upon a gentle rise and opened fire upon the advancing enemy. But the task was too great. Borne down by the weight of superior numbers, the Americans continued to retreat before the left wing of Cornwallis's command, which had not as yet been engaged with General Sullivan, and which now came on with much spirit to the charge. La Fayette maintained his position with General Sullivan and Lord Stirling, who

fought here also with great personal gallantry, until the British were within twenty yards of them, when they retired and escaped into the woods.[1]

During the struggle he had received a musket-ball in his left leg below the knee, but was not conscious of it in the midst of the excitement: shortly afterward his attention was called to it by one of the officers accompanying him, who told him that blood was running out of his boot. With the assistance of his aide-de-camp, Major de Gimat, he remounted his horse, however, and continued with the troops until, weakened by the loss of blood, he was obliged to stop for a time and have a bandage put upon his wound.[2]

In the mean time, as soon as the right wing was engaged at the Birmingham Meeting-house, General Washington had pressed forward in great haste from Chadd's Ford with fresh troops, who, although it was impossible to form them for action before that part of the army was completely routed, were still in time to check the pursuit. General Greene moved his division forward, and, by a skilful manœuvre, opened its ranks to allow the disordered and flying troops to pass, after which they were again closed and he took up a position in a narrow defile, about a mile east of the meeting-house, on the road to Dilworthtown, which he held until nightfall. At Chadd's Ford the misfortune of the day had also overtaken the division of General Wayne, who, after his flank had been uncovered by the retreat of the right wing, and after a gallant attempt to sustain his position alone, was forced to give way before the column of General Knyphausen, the latter having advanced across the Ford and assaulted the American position as soon as the sound of the cannon and musketry announced that Lord Cornwallis was actively

[1] Proceedings of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, vol. i. No. 7, p. 11; Marquis de Chastellux, Travels in North America, i. 245.

[2] Mémoires de ma Main, i. 25.

engaged toward the north. General Wayne retreated in good order to Chester, where all the American troops were directed by General Washington to concentrate. The road leading thither became a scene of indescribable disorder along the avenue of general retreat of the army, and La Fayette says that "in the midst of this horrible confusion, and with the growing darkness of the night, it was impossible to recognize anybody." He was carried along with the tide until they reached a bridge near the town,—where, wounded as he was, and having ridden twelve miles, he stopped and took measures to arrest the hasty flight of the men about him. With great difficulty he succeeded in restoring a degree of order by throwing out guards along the approach to the bridge and stopping the fugitives. Later, the Commander-in-Chief arrived, with the other generals, when La Fayette retired at length and consented to have his wound dressed by one of the surgeons.[1] His conduct during the day had been viewed with the greatest favor by those who shared its incidents with him. He had proved himself a man of courage and a soldier; and although he had been a few hours before but a foreigner, a stranger who had come into the Continental army, he was welcomed that night in the American camp as a tried friend and a comrade. General Washington directed the surgeon, with almost paternal solicitude, to care for his injury; and, writing to the President of Congress at "Twelve o'clock at night," from Chester, to announce the battle, he mentioned in his letter the Marquis de La Fayette.[2]

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[1] Mémoires de ma Main, i. 25.

[2] Sparks, Writings of Washington, v. 59.

Hon. John Blair Linn, of Bellefonte, Pennsylvania, calls my attention to the fact that it was Surgeon William Magaw, of Mercersburg, Pennsylvania, of the First Pennsylvania Regiment, who attended the Marquis de La Fayette at this time; and that when La Fayette was in America in 1825, Surgeon Magaw, then eighty years of age, called upon him, and, presenting himself, said, "General, do you know me?" Whereupon La Fayette immediately

In after-life La Fayette recurred with tenderness and gratitude to the kind consideration and sympathy which he found in the hearts of the American people in the midst of the period of doubt and difficulty through which the country was then passing. "M. de La Fayette was no longer a stranger," said he. "There never was an adoption so complete." And while, in the councils of war, he trembled at the thought that his voice, that of a youth but twenty years of age, might have an influence in deciding questions which should affect the interests of Europe as well as of America, he was admitted to the deliberations of the leaders of the Revolution and took part in the consideration of those measures by which they won success for liberty in the face of all obstacles.[1]

This early recognition of La Fayette is one of the remarkable incidents of his career in the Revolution,—all the more so when we consider his youth and his lack of experience at that time in the practical affairs of the United States. It was largely due to the earnestness of his character, which commended him to those with whom he shared the difficulties and disappointments of the struggle, and to his honesty of purpose, that won confidence for him which the history of his conduct throughout the war has shown not to have been misplaced. Whilst he adapted himself with unusual facility to a new national character and to a new set of circumstances, he brought with him into his American life a steadfastness, inherited amid the rugged mountains of Auvergne, which made him a trusty counsellor and a loyal friend. Of his personal courage there was no possible doubt from the first moment that he came into the presence of the enemy.

It is important to note in this connection, in forming an

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replied, to the great pleasure of the old gentleman, "I am unable to recall your name, but you are the surgeon who dressed my wound at the battle of Brandywine."

[1] Mémoires de ma Main, i. 28.

estimate of the Marquis de La Fayette, that the credit and honor to which he attained so rapidly upon his arrival in this country, and which increased each year during his service of the United States in the Revolution, were based upon his own merit and achievements and the sterling qualities of his mind. He had, it is true, the prestige of high birth, and he was in a sense the representative of a nation whose friendship was very precious to the citizens of the new Republic, then looking to the continent of Europe for encouragement and support. These things had their value in his formal relations to the Government, and would, no doubt, have entitled him under any circumstances to respectful consideration; but they could not suffice to fulfil a career like his. For that which gave La Fayette the affection of General Washington, which won his way to the hearts of the American people and made him one of the leaders in the war of Independence, was neither the nobleman nor the representative; it was the man, La Fayette himself.

The night after the action at Brandywine he lay with the army at Chester, and upon the following day he was transported by water to Philadelphia, General Washington having upon that day marched his army back to its former camp near the Falls of Schuylkill, at Germantown. The British occupied the battle-field on the night of the 11th of September, attending to their wounded, who were so numerous that it taxed the strength of their surgeons to take care of them, and they were obliged to send to General Washington for surgeons to look after the wounded American prisoners whom they had taken.[1] That General Howe made no attempt to follow the Americans that night, or to cut off their retreat, was regarded by La Fayette as a grave error; and in reviewing the situation in the light of subsequent events and of the added experi-

[1] La Fayette, Mémoires de ma Main, i. 26.

ence of many years, in after-life, he recorded his deliberate judgment that "if the enemy had then advanced to Darby the American army must have been cut off and destroyed. The British lost a night of precious time, and that was perhaps the greatest of their mistakes during a war in which they made many others besides." [1]

Whilst the wounded young general was being tenderly cared for in Philadelphia, his first thought was, naturally, of his wife, whom he loved with a deep affection, and from whom he sought to withhold every cause of anxiety when that was possible. He made light to her of the dangers of war, and playfully assured her, as we have already seen, that generals were never exposed to injury, indeed that they lived so long as to keep young men out of promotion, and that, being a general, he had a warrant of safety; though it must be confessed that his first encounter with the enemy had not proved the exact truth of his assertion.

The separation from her husband was a sad trial to Madame de La Fayette; but she endured it with admirable courage, and never uttered a word of complaint; for his interests were so intimately her own, that whatever contributed toward his honor and credit became the chief purpose of her life, and she willingly aided him in it. La Fayette's consciousness of this impelled him always to treat her with the tenderest consideration, and his letters show that he was extremely sensitive about anything that might cause her uneasiness or give her pain. Now that the battle had been fought at Brandywine and that he was wounded, he grew solicitous lest she should hear the news, possibly in an exaggerated form, through some other channel than his own letters,—that she might even be told that he was dead. He hastened, therefore, to write to her the following letter:

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[1] La Fayette, Mémoires de ma Main, i. 26.

"I write you two words, dear heart, by some French officers, friends of mine, who came out with me, but who have not obtained commissions and are now returning to France. Let me begin by telling you that I am well, because I shall have to tell you later that we had a battle yesterday in good earnest and that our side did not get the best of it. Our Americans gave way at last, after having shown a firm front for a considerable time, and, whilst I was making an effort to rally them, the English gentlemen paid me the compliment of a musket-ball, which wounded me slightly in the leg. But it is nothing serious, dear heart; the ball touched neither bone nor nerve, and I shall have nothing worse to endure than to lie flat on my back for a little while—though this last provokes me very greatly. I trust, my dear heart, that you will not be uneasy about me. Indeed, this is a good reason why you should be less so than ever, because I am now out of active service for some time to come; and I beg you to believe that I intend to take good care of myself. This battle will have some bad results for America, I fear. But we must try to make up for it if we can. You ought to have received many letters from me by this time, unless the English are as hostile to my correspondence as they appear to be to my legs. I have had only one letter from you, and I am longing for news. Adieu. I am forbidden to write more than this. For several days past I have had no sleep. Last night we spent in making our retreat and in my journey to this place, where I am exceedingly well taken care of." [1]

La Fayette remained but a few days in Philadelphia. The approach of the British, and the probability that they would soon take possession of the city, made it exceedingly likely, if he stayed there, that he would fall into their hands as a prisoner of war. He was transported, therefore, by water to Bristol, on the Delaware River; and shortly afterward Mr. Henry Laurens, who was going to join Congress at York, passing through Bristol, took him up in his travelling carriage and conveyed him to Bethlehem, where he was left in charge of the kind and gentle Moravians. There, he says, "the mild religion of this community of brethren, their unity of

[1] From Philadelphia, 12th September, 1777: Correspondance, i. 100.

interests, of education, and of property, presented a wide contrast in this great and innocent family with the scenes of carnage and the convulsions of civil war" which he had just left.[1]

Amid the peaceful influences of these surroundings La Fayette spent about four weeks, waiting for his wound to heal. Full of enthusiasm for the American cause, his mind was active with projects for its advancement, not only at home but also in remote quarters of the globe where the British Government was established and where British interests might be attacked. The enforced quiet of his body appears to have given occasion to an uncommon energy of thought and to the uncontrolled flight of his

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[1] In a Diary kept at the Single Brethren's House, which was used by the Continental army as a hospital, is the following entry: "1777, September 21, Sunday. Towards evening, as the wounded began to arrive, the influx of strangers became greater, so that the Inn could not accommodate all. Among others came many French officers and Colonels, and also a General, who is a distinguished Marquis." In the Bethlehem Congregation Diary appear also these entries: "1777, Sept. 21, Sunday. Late in the evening arrived the wounded generals Woodford and the Marquis La Fayette, with a large number of disabled officers.—October 16. The French Marquis, whom we have found to be a very intelligent and pleasant young man, came to bid us adieu, and requested to be shown through the Sisters' House, which we were pleased to grant. He was accompanied by his Adjutant, and expressed his admiration of the institution. While recovering from his wound, he spent much of his time in reading, and, among other matter, the history of our mission in Greenland.—October 18. The French Marquis and General Woodford left for the army to-day."

Upon his arrival in Bethlehem, La Fayette was taken to the old Sun Inn, which is still used as an inn, and is much frequented by travellers.

Mr. John W. Jordan, of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, has kindly communicated to me this note: "When La Fayette reached Bethlehem, the Inn was so crowded that he could only be accommodated overnight. Quarters were given him in a house near the Inn, then occupied by the assistants to the farmer; and Mrs. Barbara Beckel, the wife of the chief farmer of the Bethlehem farms, was deputed to wait upon him. But as that house was inconvenient, and as Mrs. Beckel was unable to give him proper attention there, she had him removed to her own house (on the main street, below the Inn), where a suite of rooms, on the second floor, was put in order for him. Miss Liesel Beckel, who assisted her mother, was living when General de La Fayette revisited the United States. I well remember the house, and I have been in the rooms occupied by La Fayette."

imagination; and whilst "the excellent Moravian brothers were mourning over his warlike folly,"[1] he was planning conquests in the Atlantic Ocean and in the far-off regions of India, to which he summoned not only the French Colonial Governors, but even the ministry of France itself, to aid in establishing the independence of the United States. He proposed to the Marquis de Bouillé, a relative of his, then Governor of the Windward Islands, a plan of attack upon the British West Indies, to be carried out under the protection of the American flag; a plan which M. de Bouillé is said, indeed, to have looked upon with considerable favor, though, of course, it could not have been sanctioned at that time by the Government, which was still at peace with England. And, in spite of his somewhat uncertain relations with the French Cabinet after his escape from France and from the *lettre-de-cachet*, he wrote to the Comte de Maurepas, the Prime Minister, to present a plan of assault, also under the American flag, upon the British agencies in India. The minister did not accept the proposition, but he was struck by the boldness of this conception and the unusual vigor of its advocate, who seemed to him to hesitate at nothing. He remarked afterward in connection with this subject that he verily believed La Fayette would some day strip the palace of Versailles of its furniture for the benefit of "his American cause;" for that when once he got an idea into his head there was no telling where he would stop.

La Fayette suffered considerably from his wound, at Bethlehem. But the lightness of his heart, and his feelings of kindness and good will to all about him, kept him cheerful; while his youthful vigor, aided by excellent general health, carried him rapidly toward recovery. There is no trace of sadness or loneliness in his letters of the time; for it was impossible for him not to make friends.

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[1] Mémoires de ma Main, i. 28.

His genial temperament won those with whom he lived, so that he does not appear to have felt at any time that he was a stranger in a strange land. His fixed determination in coming to America was to share its fortunes, to attach himself to its interests, and to make its people his people. In this he remained perfectly consistent. He realized too, that in this respect his position was different from that of others who had chosen a similar course in enlisting in the war; but he attributed the result to circumstances that lay entirely within his own control and presumably in theirs; that is to say, that if the other foreign officers did not live happily in America the fault was largely to be sought in their own attitude toward the American people. He said, in speaking of it, whilst he was at Bethlehem,—

"All the foreigners who are in the army, for I shall not mention those who have not obtained commissions, and who will, consequently, make unfair statements about America when they return to France,—because the angry man and the man seeking vengeance are not entirely honest,—all the other foreigners now employed here, I say, are discontented, and complaining; they are filled with hatred toward others, and they are hated themselves. They cannot understand why I, of all the foreigners in America, should be well treated, whilst I do not understand why they should be disliked. For my part, in the midst of the disputes and disagreements common to all armies, especially when there are officers in them of other nations, I, who am of an easy disposition, am fortunate enough to retain the good will of all, both foreigners and Americans. I love them all; I hope to deserve their esteem, and so we are mutually satisfied." [1]

In this description of the feelings and conduct of the foreign officers in the Continental army, among whom there was no doubt a great deal of discontent, engendered by jealousy, possibly also by ill will, it is fair to presume that La Fayette had in mind those principally of inferior

[1] To Mme. de La Fayette, 1st October, 1777: Correspondance, i. 106.

rank who had drifted to this country in search of employment from the French Islands or from France itself, in that spirit of adventure which made them unacceptable guests and not infrequently embarrassing companions in arms. Notwithstanding his very general statement in regard to the foreign officers, we must believe that he had some gentlemen in his thoughts to whom, as a matter of course, it did not apply; because there were honorable exceptions, among the French officers, of men whom La Fayette cherished and whose services entitle them to our grateful remembrance in treating of the incidents of the time. There was, for example, M. de Gimat, La Fayette's own aide-de-camp, who followed him with devotion, and to whom he often affectionately referred as a comrade and a friend; there was Lieutenant-Colonel Fleury, a distinguished officer of engineers, in charge of the defences at Fort Mifflin, who was wounded while gallantly fulfilling his duty during the British attack upon that post, and who afterward received the thanks of Congress and a medal for his conduct at Stony Point;[1] there was the Chevalier du Buysson, aide-de-camp to the Baron de Kalb, who fought heroically at Camden and, though disabled himself, stood near his commander and supported him when the latter fell mortally wounded in the heat of the combat; there were M. Mauduit-Duplessis, M. de Gouvion, M. Capitaine de Chesnoy, and, certainly not the least of them all, there was the Baron de Kalb, to whose self-sacrifice La Fayette paid an honorable tribute, nearly half a century later, when visiting the scene of his heroism, in the State of South Carolina.[2] General de Kalb was a man of mature judgment, whose long career as a soldier had inured him to the hardships of warfare, in the midst of which he frequently set an example, during the Revolution, of great patience and fortitude. His manner

[1] Journals of Congress, 26th July, 1779.

[2] Kapp's Kalb, p. 250.

was affable and his intercourse agreeable with those about him, though his riper age made him, perhaps, less prone to intimacy than he might otherwise have been. It is true that his own criticisms of America, given in the confidence of private correspondence, were not free from a certain tone of severity; yet there is no doubt that his bearing as a soldier was always in accord with the obligations and the dignity of his rank.

Curiously enough, we have De Kalb's testimony also as to the frettings and discord among the foreign officers, given a little later, in very much the same language as that of the Marquis de La Fayette. He wrote to Madame de Kalb, on the 5th of January, 1778, "On the whole, I have annoyances to bear, of which you can hardly form a conception. One of them is the mutual jealousy of almost all the French officers, particularly against those of higher rank than the rest. These people think of nothing but their incessant intrigues and backbitings. They hate each other like the bitterest enemies, and endeavor to injure each other wherever an opportunity offers. I have given up their society, and very seldom see them. La Fayette is the sole exception; I always meet him with the same cordiality and the same pleasure. He is an excellent young man, and we are good friends. . . . La Fayette is much liked; he is on the best of terms with Washington."[1] There is a refreshing flavor of kindness and gratitude, as well as the tone of a healthy mind, all through La Fayette's correspondence, in the frequent references to himself and his surroundings. Still making light of his wound, he reported to Madame de La Fayette the devoted attention of his surgeons, and the tender care with which his hosts at Bethlehem watched over him whilst he was confined there; and in explaining to her the details of the campaign, in which it was impossible

[1] Kapp's Kalb, p. 143.

to conceal the American reverses, he showed an interest in the welfare of this country remarkable for the intensity of its feeling and highly honorable to him in his loyalty to a cause in which he now regarded himself not only as a defender, but as a patriot. His love for General Washington was one of the leading motives of his thought. The Commander-in-Chief understood La Fayette's nature and estimated his qualities very quickly after having come into contact with him; he admitted him to an intimacy which grew closer as the war continued and gave to the younger man a view of the character of Washington which filled him with admiration. In his letter to Madame de La Fayette, from Bethlehem, the 1st of October, 1777, he said,—

"Be entirely free from anxiety as to my wound, for all the doctors in America are aroused in my behalf. I have a friend who has spoken for me in a way to insure my being well taken care of; and that is General Washington. That estimable man, whose talents and whose virtues I admired before, whom I venerate the more now as I learn to know him, has been kind enough to me to become my intimate friend. His tender interest in me quickly won my heart. I am established in his household, and we live together like two devoted brothers, in a mutual intimacy and confidence. This friendship makes me most happy in this country. When he sent his surgeon-in-chief to me, he directed him to care for me as if I were his son, because he loved me as much; and, having heard that I wanted to join the army too soon again, he wrote me a letter full of tenderness in which he admonished me to wait until I should be entirely well." [1]

This attachment of La Fayette to General Washington is evident in the frequent references to him throughout his correspondence, in which we not only find the devotion of an ardent friendship in return for acts of kindness, or for the tender consideration with which the Commander-in-Chief treated this young Frenchman, calling forth from him repeated expressions of the warmest gratitude,

[1] Correspondance, i. 105.

but have also his deliberate judgment, possessing for us, far more than could the mere references of one friend to the excellent qualities of another, the value of a contemporary estimate of the character of Washington, formed by one who studied him closely and who knew him well. A remarkable example of this occurs in a well-considered letter written by La Fayette in December, 1777, to his father-in-law, the Duc d'Ayen, which contains a description of the American situation at that time, set forth with striking conciseness and accuracy, in which he says,—

"Our General is a man truly made for this Revolution, which could not be successfully accomplished without him. I see him nearer than any man in the world; and I see that he is worthy of the adoration of his country. His warm friendship and his entire confidence in me in regard to all military and political subjects, great and small, that occupy him, place me in a situation to judge of all that he has to perform, to reconcile, and to overcome. I admire him more each day for the beauty of his character and of his mind. Certain foreigners, offended at not having obtained commissions, although that was in no wise his fault, and some others, whose ambitious projects he was not willing to countenance, certain jealous *cabaleurs*, have striven to injure his reputation; but his name will be revered in all coming ages by the friends of liberty and of humanity everywhere; and although I am bound to do honor to my friend, yet I believe that the part he is now sustaining gives me the right to declare how much I respect and admire him." [1]

During La Fayette's retirement at Bethlehem, after the battle of Brandywine, the persistent and desperate struggle had been kept up by General Washington with his worn-out troops, against the conquest of Pennsylvania by the British and against their possession of the Delaware River. Misfortunes followed one another in unvarying succession, as the Americans were forced to retire before the advancing enemy. Philadelphia was lost soon after

[1] Correspondance de La Fayette, i. 131.

the retreat from Brandywine, from lack of men to hold it, and Lord Cornwallis entered the city at the head of his British and Hessian grenadiers, on the 26th of September. The battle of Germantown was fought and lost on the 4th of October, in a valiant attempt to strike a blow for the nation. The American army had retired to a point upon Perkiomen Creek, at Pennybacker's Mills, in the present Montgomery County, and later in October (on the 16th) it moved to Worcester Township, whence it proceeded to Whitpaine; and on the 2d of November, when the British concentrated their forces within Philadelphia, General Washington approached, and went into camp at Whitemarsh, about twelve miles to the north of the city.[1] Nothing remained now in the vicinity of Philadelphia to be contested except the control of the Delaware River, which was, of course, necessary for the British to possess in order to have free access by water for the purpose of supplying provisions to the army and the citizens in the town, and also, what was very important to General Howe, to enable the land forces to co-operate with the fleet. Several lines of *chevaux-de-frise* obstructed the passage of the river a few miles below Philadelphia, which were defended by two fortifications that still remained in possession of the Americans,—Fort Mifflin, on Mud Island, and Fort Mercer, nearly opposite, on the Jersey shore, at Red Bank, neither of which had been constructed in a manner to withstand a systematic attack by a large force, but which would serve to annoy vessels passing up or down the channel. Whilst the Americans continued to hold these two posts, it was impossible for the British to remove the awkward and heavy machines which had been sunk in the bed of the river and completely obstructed its navigation; yet so long as these impediments remained, General Howe was separated from his

[1] Baker, The Camp by the Old Gulph Mill, p. 4.

ships. Thus the attention of both armies was directed toward these little forts on the Delaware River, as, for the moment, of paramount importance. Without them, General Howe would be obliged to evacuate Philadelphia and abandon the main purpose of his expedition. On the other hand, General Washington was reluctant to give them up, because they were the only means that remained to him, in his enfeebled condition, of embarrassing the enemy.

A spirited attack was made by the British forces upon Red Bank on the night of the 22d of October, which was repelled by the garrison and resulted in the death of Count Donop, the Hessian commander of the expedition; but, while this momentary success afforded great pleasure and encouragement to Congress and to the people, it served only to aid Washington's policy of delay, and to postpone for but a short time the capture of those posts, which, under existing circumstances, was inevitable. Fort Mifflin succumbed on the 16th of November, before a combined assault of the British land and naval batteries, after a most determined resistance and only when the works were so thoroughly reduced to ruins as to afford no further protection to the garrison. Two days later, Fort Mercer surrendered to Lord Cornwallis, who had crossed over from Philadelphia and marched down on the Jersey side with a large force to attack it.

It was during these operations upon the Delaware River that the Marquis de La Fayette, now sufficiently recovered to join the army, found an opportunity, almost immediately after his arrival upon the ground, to engage with the enemy and to distinguish himself in a small action near Gloucester, which he conducted with great gallantry. Although his wound was not sufficiently healed to enable him to wear his boot, his impatience to be with the army and his great desire to take part in the remaining movements of the campaign led him to the head-quarters at the

camp, in the present Montgomery County, about the 20th of October.[1]

Shortly after his arrival there the news was received of Lord Cornwallis's expedition into New Jersey, whereupon General Washington ordered General Greene to cross the Delaware near Bristol and to march down on the eastern side, for the purpose of opposing him as much as possible, and, if an opportunity offered, of fighting him; for he hoped that the American force in New Jersey might be augmented sufficiently to cope with this detachment, and if, by good fortune, General Greene should be able to defeat it, the result would cripple General Howe to such an extent that he could not well recover. Always anxious to be at the front when it was likely that there would be work to do, La Fayette, who, as a volunteer, had naturally a wide privilege in serving where he preferred to do so, obtained permission to join General Greene. He had already formed a strong friendship with that officer, whom he met at the camp north of Philadelphia, on Neshaminy Creek, when he first joined the army, and afterward at the battle of Brandywine; and his presence upon this expedition into New Jersey was evidently very agreeable to General Greene, who wrote from a point called Fourlanes End, near Bristol, on the 20th of November, to Mrs. Greene, as follows:

"I am now on my march to Red Bank Fort. Lord Cornwallis crossed over into the Jerseys day before yesterday, to invest that place with a large body of troops. I am in hopes to have the pleasure to meet his Lordship. This eccentric movement will lengthen out the campaign for some weeks at least, and it is possible may transfer the seat of war for the winter. . . . The weather begins to get severe, and campaigning of it disagreeable, but necessity obliges us to keep the field for some time. . . . I lodge in a fine country-house to-night. The Marquis de La Fayette is in

[1] It is likely that La Fayette, who left Bethlehem on the 18th of October, joined the army at Methacton Hill, in Worcester Township, where it encamped from the 16th to the 21st of October.

company with me; he has left a young wife and a fine fortune of fourteen thousand pounds sterling per annum to come and engage in the cause of liberty—this is a noble enthusiasm. He is one of the sweetest-tempered young gentlemen; he purposes to visit Boston this winter; if so you'll have an opportunity to see him." [1]

The Marquis de La Fayette accompanied General Greene to Mount Holly; although, as Fort Mercer had already been abandoned and the Continental troops whom Greene expected had not joined him, there was no opportunity to execute a movement against the British. Lord Cornwallis was at Gloucester, nearly opposite Philadelphia, and was engaged in transferring across the river to that city a great quantity of forage and provisions which he had collected through the fertile country of New Jersey, with a force that was estimated to be about five thousand men. His situation at Gloucester was entirely secure against attack, because his camp lay immediately under cover of the guns of the British men of war, which had now moved up the Delaware to protect his operations in crossing. On the 25th of November, La Fayette left the head-quarters at Mount Holly with about three hundred men, made up of some one hundred and fifty of Morgan's Rifles, under Lieutenant-Colonel Butler, and the same number of militia, for the purpose of reconnoitring the enemy's position. He proceeded first to a point almost within reach of Gloucester itself, called Sandy Point, a narrow tongue of land separated from the town by a small stream called Newtown Creek; where, in order to assure himself that the enemy were transferring their provisions across the river, he advanced with such boldness that he could plainly see their movements; and he placed himself, to the consternation of those who were with him, in a position where he might readily have been either captured or shot, if the British outposts had

[1] Greene's Life of Greene, i. 514.

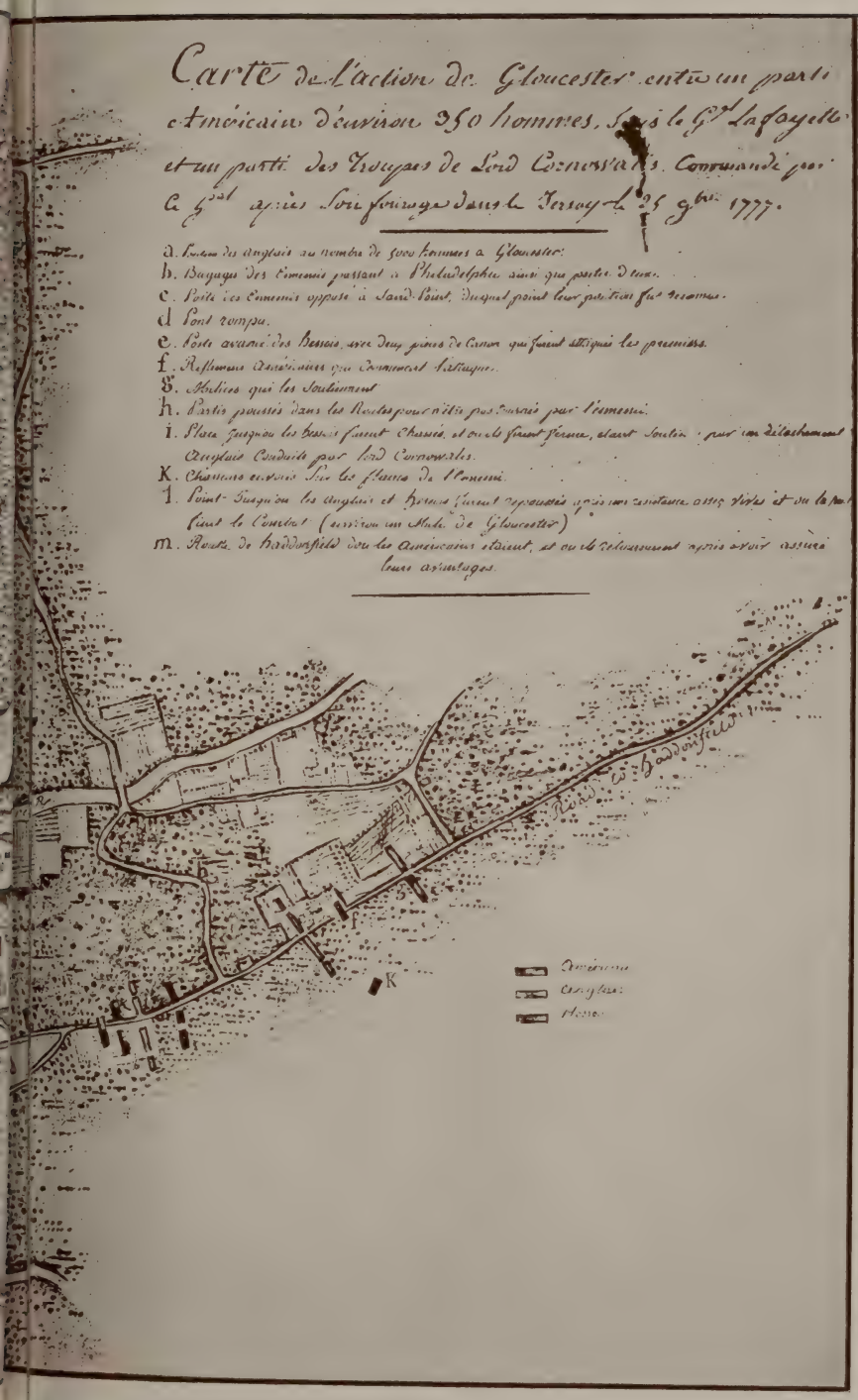
been alert; indeed, he admitted, afterward, that this was an imprudence which might have cost him dear, "if those who had it then in their power to kill him had not relied too confidently upon others who ought to have been upon the lookout to make him a prisoner."[1] Retiring from Sandy Point, and having crossed Newtown Creek, he proceeded, at about four o'clock in the afternoon, with his whole force, along the road leading from Haddonfield into Gloucester. When he had come within two miles of the town, he fell in with an advance post of Hessians numbering four hundred men, with several pieces of artillery, whom he immediately attacked and drove in. As the Hessians retreated, La Fayette pressed them, advancing with great caution, however, and taking care to throw out small pickets along the by-ways which crossed the Haddonfield Road, to give him warning of danger upon his flanks and to prevent the enemy from getting behind him to cut off his retreat. He drove the Hessians a mile or more toward Gloucester, killing and wounding fifty or sixty men, when Lord Cornwallis, who supposed that an attack was about to be made by the whole division of General Greene, came up at nightfall, with his grenadiers, to the support of the retreating Hessians, and La Fayette drew off under cover of the darkness to rejoin the main body. This small encounter had given La Fayette an opportunity to show considerable military skill in the management of his troops, and he won the good opinion not only of all those about him, but of General Greene himself, who reported it upon the following day to General Washington in a letter in which he says, "The Marquis, with about four hundred militia and the rifle corps, attacked the enemy's picket last evening, killed about twenty and wounded as many more, and took about twenty prisoners. The Marquis is charmed

[1] Mémoires de ma Main, i. 33.

Philadelphie
Delaware Ry.
2 Miles
Gloucester Ferry
Sandpoint
Timber Creek
a
b
c

Carte de l'action de Gloucester entre un parti Américain d'environ 350 hommes, Sous le Gl. Lafayette et un parti des Troupes de Lord Cornwallis. Commandé par le Gal. après son passage dans le Jersey le 25 9bre. 1777.

a. Fusiliers anglais au nombre de 3000 hommes à Gloucester.
b. Bagages des Ennemis passant à Philadelphie sans que postes d'eux.
c. Poste des Ennemis opposé à Sand-Point, duquel point leur partie fut renvoyée.
d. Pont rompu.
e. Poste avancé des Bersais, avec deux pièces de Canon qui furent attaqués les premières.
f. Retranchemens Américains qui devinrent battus.
g. Abatis qui les soutiennent.
h. Postes pourvus dans les Roches pour n'être pas tournés par l'ennemi.
i. Place jusqu'où les Bersais furent Chassés, et où ils furent fermes, étant soutenus par un détachement Anglais Conduit par Lord Cornwallis.
K. Chasseurs envoyés Sur les flancs de l'ennemi.
l. Point jusqu'où les Anglais et Hessois furent repoussés après une resistance assez Vive et où le Gal. fut le Combat (environ un Mille de Gloucester)
m. Route de Haddonfield dont les Américains s'étaient, et où ils rallièrent après avoir assuré leurs avantages.



with the spirited behavior of the militia and rifle corps. They drove the enemy above a mile and kept the ground until dark. . . . The Marquis is determined to be in the way of danger."[1]

La Fayette himself was full of enthusiasm about the bravery and good conduct of his men. The military instinct was so strong within him that he was as proud of their behavior as if it had been a personal compliment to himself, and he addressed the militia and the riflemen with all the warmth of his heart, in expressing his gratitude. From Haddonfield he wrote to General Washington the next day, the 26th of November,[2]—

"DEAR GENERAL,—I went down to this place since the day before yesterday, in order to be acquainted of all the roads and grounds around the enemy. I heard at my arrival that their main body was between Great and Little Timber Creek since the same evening. Yesterday morning, in reconnoitering about, I have been told that they were very busy in crossing the Delaware. I saw them myself in their boats, and sent that intelligence to General Greene as soon as possible, as every other thing I heard of. But I want to acquaint your excellency of a little event of last evening, which, though not very considerable in itself, will certainly please you, on account of the bravery and alacrity a

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[1] Greene's Life of Greene, i. 528.

[2] Correspondence, American edition, i. 120.

This letter and all those written by La Fayette to General Washington, as well as those to other Americans, were in English, so far as his command of our language extended at that time. They were translated into French for the edition of his Correspondence published by his family in Paris, but were printed in the American edition in the exact wording used by the Marquis. Wherever he wrote in English, therefore, I have quoted from the original; the translations here used I have made from the text of the French edition, in 6 volumes, Paris, Fournier aîné, 1837.

After the death of General Washington, his family, with delicate consideration, returned to the Marquis de La Fayette the original letters written by him to the Commander-in-Chief during and after the American War. Washington's letters to him were all lost, however, with La Fayette's other documents, in the destruction of the family records at Chavaniac during the French Revolution. Fortunately, General Washington had kept minutes of most of them, which La Fayette subsequently had copied during his last visit to the United States, in 1824 and 1825.

small party of ours showed on that occasion. After having spent the most part of the day to make myself well acquainted with the certainty of their motions, I came pretty late into the Gloucester Road, between the two creeks. I had ten light-horse with Mr. Lindsey, almost a hundred and fifty riflemen, under Colonel Buttler, and two piquets of the militia, commanded by Colonels Hite and Ellis: my whole body was not three hundred. Colonel Armand,[1] Colonel Laumoy, the Chevaliers Duplessis and Gimat, were the Frenchmen who went with me. A scout of my men, with whom was Mr. Duplessis, to see how near were the first piquets from Gloucester, found at two miles and a half of it a strong post of three hundred and fifty Hessians with field pieces, (what number I did know, by the unanimous deposition of their prisoners), and engaged immediately. As my little reconnoitering party was all in fine spirits, I supported them. We pushed the Hessians more than an half mile from the place where was their main body, and we made them run very fast: British reinforcements came twice to them, but, very far from recovering their ground, they went always back. The darkness of the night prevented us then to push that advantage, and, after standing upon the ground we had got, I ordered them to return very slow to Haddonfield. The enemy, knowing perhaps by our drums that we were not so near, came again to fire at us; but the brave Major Moriss, with a part of his riflemen, sent them back, and pushed them very fast. I understand that they have had between twenty-five and thirty wounded, at least that number killed, among whom, I am certain, is an officer; some say more, and the prisoners told me they have lost the commandant of that body; we got yet, this day, fourteen prisoners. I sent you the most moderate account I had from themselves. We left one single man killed, a lieutenant of militia, and only five of ours were wounded. Such is the account of our little entertainment, which is indeed much too long for the matter, but I take the greatest pleasure to let you know that the conduct of our soldiers is above all praises: I never saw men so merry, so spirited, so desirous to go on to the enemy, whatever forces they could have, as that small party was in this little fight. I found the riflemen above even their reputation, and the militia above all expectations I could have: I

[1] This was the name assumed in America by the Marquis de La Rouerie, who left France because of disappointment in a love-affair. See Townsend Ward, in the Pennsylvania Magazine of History, vol. ii. p. 1; Chastellux, Travels in North America, i. 183.

returned to them my very sincere thanks this morning. I wish that this little success of ours may please you, though a very trifling one, I find it very interesting on account of the behaviour of our soldiers.

"Some time after I came back, General Varnum arrived here; General Greene is, too, in this place since this morning; he engaged me to give you myself the account of the little advantage of that small part of the troops under his command. I have nothing more to say to your excellency about our business on this side, because he is writing himself; I should have been very glad, if circumstances had permitted me, to be useful to him upon a greater scale. As he is obliged to march slow in order to attend his troops, and as I am here only a volunteer, I will have the honour to wait upon your excellency as soon as possible, and I'll set out to-day; it will be a great pleasure for me to find myself again with you.

"With the most tender affection and highest respect, I have the honour to be,

"La Fayette.

"I must tell, too, that the riflemen had been the whole day running before my horse, without eating or taking any rest.

"I have just now a certain assurance that two British officers, besides those I spoke you of, have died this morning of their wounds in an house; this, and some other circumstances, let me believe that their lost may be greater than I told to your excellency."

The news of this action was extremely gratifying to General Washington, because it encouraged the militia by an example of their usefulness to the service and was a proof that they had soldierly qualities worthy to be compared with those of older troops inured to war,—an encouragement greatly needed to stimulate enlistments, which were lagging; and, besides this, it was in accord with the policy of the Commander-in-Chief at that time,—namely, to annoy and embarrass the enemy at every point, to cut off their supplies, to attack their foraging-parties, and, in general, to make their occupation of the country as uncomfortable as possible. It brought the Marquis de La Fayette once more into prominence under very favorable

circumstances; and it was the direct cause of his attaining what he so earnestly desired,—the command of a division with full authority as a major-general.

General Washington had written to Congress in his behalf, from the camp at Whitemarsh, soon after La Fayette had returned to the army from Bethlehem, evidently willing to accede to the solicitations of the young major-general, who was intensely anxious to serve in a capacity more active and more responsible than that of a mere volunteer. But the Commander-in-Chief was left in doubt upon this subject as to the intentions of Congress, and, since no official instructions had been given to him in reply to his first inquiry, further than that the rank of major-general had been conferred upon La Fayette without command or compensation, he felt some embarrassment as to what course he ought to take and what he was expected to do. He began to fear that La Fayette had misunderstood the intentions of Congress, or at least had exaggerated the import of his commission; and yet General Washington held him in such esteem that he wished to promote him. He recognized that La Fayette's earnestness and zeal in the American cause, and the services he had rendered, especially in the exertions he made to counteract in France the injurious reports of the war that were spread abroad by the angered and disappointed Frenchmen returning home without commissions, rendered him worthy of a favorable consideration on the part of Congress. "I feel myself," he wrote to the President of Congress, "in a delicate situation with respect to the Marquis de Lafayette. He is extremely solicitous of having a command equal to his rank, and professes very different ideas, as to the purposes of his appointment, from those Congress have mentioned to me. He certainly did not understand them. I do not know in what light they will view the matter; but it appears to me, from a consideration of his illustrious and important connections, the

attachment which he has manifested for our cause, and the consequences which his return in disgust might produce, that it will be advisable to gratify him in his wishes; and the more so, as several gentlemen from France, who came over under some assurances, have gone back disappointed in their expectations. His conduct, with respect to them, stands in a favorable point of view, he having interested himself to remove their uneasiness, and urged the impropriety of their making any unfavorable representations upon their arrival at home; and in all his letters he has placed our affairs in the best situation he could. Besides, he is sensible, discreet in his manners, has made great proficiency in our language, and, from the disposition he discovered at the battle of Brandywine, possesses a large share of bravery and military ardor."[1]

When the report of La Fayette's exploit at Gloucester reached General Washington, on the day after it occurred, the 26th of November, he wrote again to the President of Congress, in a letter which bears evidence of the kindest feeling toward La Fayette, to suggest his appointment to a command. He enclosed the extract from General Greene's despatch, quoted above, and added, "I should also be happy in their determination respecting the Marquis de Lafayette. He is more and more solicitous to be in actual service, and is pressing in his applications for a command. I ventured before to submit my sentiments upon the measure, and I still fear a refusal will not only induce him to return in disgust, but may involve some unfavorable consequences. There are now some vacant divisions in the army, to one of which he may be appointed, if it should be the pleasure of Congress. I am convinced he possesses a large share of that military ardor, which generally characterizes the nobility of his country. He went to Jersey with General Greene, and

[1] From Whitemarsh, 1st November, 1777 : Sparks, Writings of Washington, v. 128.

I find he has not been inactive there. This you will perceive by the following extract from a letter just received from General Greene."[1]

This recommendation and the reports of La Fayette's own conduct were so favorably received by Congress that it voted, upon the same day that the General's letter was received, as follows: "*Resolved.* That General Washington be informed, it is highly agreeable to Congress that the Marquis de La Fayette be appointed to the command of a division in the Continental Army."[2] Three days later, a general order was issued announcing that the Marquis de La Fayette was appointed to the Virginia division lately of General Stephen, whose command had been vacant since the battle of Germantown. The appointment was received with satisfaction in the country; and we happen to have an expression of the popular favor, in a letter written at that time, and quoted by Mr. Sparks, from Patrick Henry to General Washington, in which he says, "I take the liberty of enclosing to you two letters from France to the Marquis de Lafayette. One of them is from his lady, I believe. I beg to be presented to him in the most acceptable manner. I greatly revere his person and amiable character."[3]

The campaign of 1777 was just closing. Active operations were threatened for a moment when General Howe led his army out from Philadelphia as far as Chestnut Hill, within a few miles of Washington's position at Whitemarsh, with the evident intention of attacking it. But, having manœuvred for four days as if about to bring on a general engagement, the British suddenly retired, on the night of the 8th of December, to Philadelphia. They had accomplished nothing whatever as the result of this expedition, except greatly to increase the self-reliance of

[1] Sparks, Writings of Washington, v. 170.
[2] Journals of Congress, 1st December, 1777.
[3] Sparks, Writings of Washington, v. 172.

the American army by affording to it the best evidence of the respect in which General Howe held the courage of the men and the military skill of their commander, when, having marched out to fight them, he feared to do so after he discovered that he should have to meet them upon equal terms as to position and numbers. Shortly afterward (on the 19th of December) General Washington withdrew to Valley Forge, where, as La Fayette says, "having skilfully erected, in a few days, a city of wooden huts, the army established itself in its melancholy winter quarters," —melancholy indeed, in its nakedness, its privation, its lack of food, its suffering from disease, during that dreadful winter. In the midst of it all, La Fayette, put then, perhaps, to the severest test of his allegiance to American freedom, shared with that devoted army the bitter chances of war. "The unfortunate soldiers," as he tells us, "were in want of everything; they had neither coats, nor hats, nor shirts, nor shoes; their feet and legs froze till they grew black, and it was often necessary to amputate them. . . . The army frequently passed whole days without food, and the patient endurance of both soldiers and officers was a miracle which every moment served to renew;" but "the sacred fire of liberty was not extinguished, and most of the people hated British tyranny." Performing his military duties with rigid exactness, La Fayette adopted in every respect the American dress and habits. He tried to be even more simple, more frugal, and more self-denying than the Americans themselves. Brought up as he had been in ease and surrounded by personal comforts, he suddenly changed his whole manner of living, and his constitution adapted itself to privation as well as to fatigue.[1] This example of single-minded devotion is almost unequalled; and the fact that it was entirely voluntary adds to the strength of its claim upon our gratitude

[1] Mémoires de ma Main, i. 37.

and respect. Writing home to the Duc d'Ayen, his letter, full of earnestness, expresses the zeal with which he undertook his task:

"I have passed the whole summer without obtaining a division, which you know I have always wished for, and I have lived all that time at General Washington's house, where I feel as if I were a friend of twenty years' standing. Since my return from Jersey, he has offered me the choice, among several brigades, of the division I prefer, and I have selected one composed entirely of Virginians. It is weak in point of numbers at present, even in proportion to the weakness of the whole army; it is almost naked, though I have been promised cloth out of which I shall make clothes, and recruits out of which soldiers must be made in about the same length of time; unfortunately the latter is the more difficult to accomplish, even for more skilful men than I. . . . I read, I study, I examine, I listen, I reflect, and upon the result of all this I make an effort to form my opinion and to put into it as much common sense as I can. I am cautious not to talk much, lest I should say some foolish thing, and still more cautious in my actions, lest I should do some foolish thing; for I do not want to disappoint the confidence that the Americans have so kindly placed in me." [1]

[1] Correspondance de La Fayette, i. 133–134.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE PROJECTED EXPEDITION AGAINST CANADA IN 1778.

It was at this period, whilst the army was at Valley Forge, that the conspiracy was developed, known as "Conway's Cabal," which had for its purpose the overthrow of General Washington and his removal from the command of the army; in La Fayette's words, "that greatest of calamities, the loss of the only man capable of conducting the Revolution."[1] What this attempt actually was, or how far its influence extended, has not been clearly shown, and will probably never be fully understood. There is no doubt, however, that there existed a party in Congress who were personally hostile to the Commander-in-Chief, and that they were followed by certain officers in the army whose ambitious designs or secret jealousy led them easily into an attitude of defection and blinded them, for the moment, to every consideration but that of their own selfish purposes.

The achievement of General Gates at Saratoga gave him a wider reputation for military genius than he deserved; it filled his mind with an idea of his own greatness and dazzled him with the prospect of an illustrious career, in which he saw himself the head of the nation, the new and successful Commander-in-Chief. This notion unbalanced his judgment. Conway was merely a figure whom accident had brought into the way at an opportune moment and whose turbulent and discontented nature made him a ready tool; the real conspirator, no doubt, was Gates. He was held up by his secret friends before

[1] Mémoires de ma Main, i. 38.

the people as the general who could save the country from threatened destruction; while Washington was decried as having failed in the war. It was said that, with forces greatly superior to the enemy, Washington had done nothing; that he had allowed Philadelphia to be captured through mismanagement, and that he had failed of many opportunities to defeat the British. With artifices of this kind they sought to throw obstacles in his way which should force him to resign. That the party were strong in Congress is evident from the facility with which they succeeded in obtaining the control of military affairs. A new Board of War was formed, of which General Gates was appointed president, and, in defiance of all propriety, Conway was made Inspector-General, and was raised, above other brigadiers who outranked him, to the grade of major-general.[1]

A part of this plot to alienate from General Washington every strengthening influence and to deprive him of his friends was an attempt to win over La Fayette by promises of future military distinction, and by flattery. Conway, who was a soldier of no mean capacity, sought to ingratiate himself with La Fayette by a professed solicitude for his welfare and by a pretended devotion to him as a comrade in the French army, in which Conway had also served, as well as by an appeal to mutual associations and friendships in the Old World, which naturally induced in return feelings of kindness and fellowship. La Fayette had at that time considerable respect for General Gates, whom he regarded as a good soldier and for whom he shared to a great extent the admiration which had spread through the whole country in con-

[1] Though La Fayette believed that Charles Lee, and not Gates, would have profited by the success of this plot. "Il est remarquable que pour les plus fins Gates n'était pas l'objet de l'intrigue. Quoique bon officier, il n'avait pas les moyens de se soutenir. Il eût fait place au fameux général Lee, alors prisonnier des Anglais, et le premier soin de celui-ci aurait été de leur livrer et ses amis et toute l'Amérique." Mémoires de ma Main, i. 38.

sequence of his recent defeat and capture of Burgoyne. We have a letter written by M. de La Fayette to Gates from Bethlehem, immediately after the capitulation, in which he hastened to send to the victorious general his congratulations and to express the hope that he might have an opportunity of knowing him better in the course of succeeding events:[1]

"BETHLEHEM, 14 October, 1777.

"DEAR GENERAL, I can't let go your express without doing myself the pleasure of congratulating you about your happy and glorious success—the fine opportunity of your victory, and the circumstances (the taking fort Montgomery) which it meet with, is to add something yet and to your glory and to the gratefulness of every one who loves the cause we fight for. I find myself very happy to have had the pleasure of your acquaintance before your going to take the command of the Northern Army. I am very desirous, sir, to convince you how I wish to cultivate your friendship,—it is with such sentiments and those of the most perfect esteem that I have the honor to be

"dear Sir,

"Your most obedient servant,

"THE MARQUIS DE LAFAYETTE.

"I do not wraït from our camp because I am detained yet in this place for some days by my wound of Brandywine."

Two months later, he wrote again to General Gates, from "the Gulph," on the 14th of December, 1777, expressing the most kindly feelings toward him, with the evident hope that he and Gates should become warm friends, a possibility which, under the circumstances of that general's success and rising fame, La Fayette naturally contemplated with very great pleasure:[2]

"I have received with the greatest satisfaction the favor of yours. The idea of obtaining your friendship is highly pleasant to me—be certain, Sir, that you can depend upon my attachement for ever—the only love of glorious and great actions should have

[1] Gates Papers, New York Historical Society.

[2] Ibid.

inspired me with such sentiments—but the knowledge I got of your character adds infinitely to the pleasure which my heart feels in receiving the assurances of your future affection towards a young soldier who desire it very heartily."

But when he discovered through the intercepted correspondence of Conway and Gates, which Lord Stirling communicated to the Commander-in-Chief,[1] that these men referred contemptuously to General Washington, he was startled by a duplicity which he had never suspected, and he threw, without hesitation, the whole weight of his influence, and exerted all the energy of his earnest nature, in loyal defence of his general and friend. During this trying period he saw General Washington frequently in the closest intimacy, and, admitted to his confidence perhaps more than any other officer, he discussed with him the situation of the country as well as the subject of this intrigue which now attempted to destroy his honor. Fortunately for us, a part of their intercourse has been preserved in the correspondence which passed between them at that time, which, while it defines the attitude of General Washington toward "Conway's Cabal," illustrates the earnestness of character of the younger man, and the noble dignity and self-possession of the Commander, as well, perhaps, as anything that history has preserved.

On the 30th of December, 1777, the Marquis de La Fayette wrote, at the Camp, at Valley Forge, to General Washington,[2]—

"My dear General; I went yesterday morning to headquarters with an intention of speaking to your excellency, but you were too busy, and I shall lay down in this letter what I wished to say. I don't need to tell you that I am sorry for all that has happened for some time past. It is a necessary dependence of my most tender and respectful friendship for you, which affection is as true and candid as the other sentiments of my heart, and much

[1] Sparks, Writings of Washington, v. 492.

[2] Correspondence of La Fayette, American edition, i. 134.

stronger than so new an acquaintance seems to admit; but another reason, to be concerned in the present circumstances, is my ardent and perhaps enthusiastic wishes for the happiness and liberty of this country. I see plainly that America can defend herself if proper measures are taken, and now I begin to fear lest she should be lost by herself and her own sons.

"When I was in Europe I thought that here almost every man was a lover of liberty, and would rather die free than live a slave. You can conceive my astonishment when I saw that toryism was as openly professed as whiggism itself: however, at that time I believed that all good Americans were united together; that the confidence of congress in you was unbounded. Then I entertained the certitude that America would be independent in case she should not lose you. Take away, for an instant, that modest diffidence of yourself, (which, pardon my freedom, my dear General, is sometimes too great, and I wish you could know, as well as myself, what difference there is between you and any other man), you would see very plainly that if you were lost for America, there is no body who could keep the army and the revolution for six months. There are open dissensions in congress, parties who hate one another as much as the common enemy; stupid men, who, without knowing a single word about war, undertake to judge you, to make ridiculous comparisons; they are infatuated with Gates, without thinking of the different circumstances, and believe that attacking is the only thing necessary to conquer. Those ideas are entertained in their minds by some jealous men, and perhaps secret friends to the British Government, who want to push you in a moment of ill humour to some rash enterprise upon the lines or against a much stronger army. I should not take the liberty of mentioning these particulars to you if I did not receive a letter about this matter, from a young good-natured gentleman at York, whom Conway has ruined by his cunning, bad advice, but who entertains the greatest respect for you.

"I have been surprised at first, to see the few establishments of this board of war, to see the difference made between northern and southern departments, to see resolves from congress about military operations; but the promotion of Conway is beyond all my expectations. I should be glad to have new major-generals, because, as I know, you take some interest in my happiness and reputation: it is, perhaps, an occasion for your excellency to give me more agreeable commands in some interesting instances. On the other hand, General Conway says he is entirely a man to be disposed of by me. He calls himself my soldier, and the reason

of such behaviour to me is, that he wishes to be well spoken of at the French court, and his protector, the Marquis de Castries, is an intimate acquaintance of mine; but since the letter of Lord Stirling I inquired in his character. I found that he was an ambitious and dangerous man. He has done all in his power, by cunning manœuvres, to take off my confidence and affection for you. His desire was to engage me to leave this country. Now I see all the general officers of the army against congress; such disputes, if known by the enemy, would be attended with the worst consequences. I am very sorry whenever I perceive troubles raised among the defenders of the same cause, but my concern is much greater when I find officers coming from France, officers of some character in my country, to whom any fault of that kind may be imputed. The reason of my fondness for Conway was his being by all means a very brave and very good officer. However, that talent for manœuvres, and which seems so extraordinary to congress, is not so very difficult a matter for any man of common sense who applies himself to it. I must pay to General Portail, and some French officers, who came to speak me, the justice to say, that I found them as I could wish upon this occasion; for it has made a great noise among many in the army. I wish, indeed, those matters could be soon pacified. I wish your excellency could let them know how necessary you are to them, and engage them at the same time to keep peace, and simulate love among themselves till the moment when those little disputes shall not be attended with such inconveniences. It would be, too, a great pity that slavery, dishonour, ruin, and unhappiness of a whole world should issue from some trifling differences between a few men.

"You will find, perhaps, this letter very useless, and even inopportune; but I was desirous of having a pretty long conversation with you upon the present circumstances, to explain you what I think of this matter. As a proper opportunity for it did not occur, I took the liberty of laying down some of my ideas in this letter, because it is for my satisfaction to be convinced that you, my dear General, who have been indulgent enough to permit me to look on you as upon a friend, should know the confession of my sentiments in a matter which I consider as a very important one. I have the warmest love for my country and for every good Frenchman: their success fills my heart with joy; but, sir, besides Conway is an Irishman, I want countrymen, who deserve, in every point, to do honour to their country. That gentleman had engaged me by entertaining my head with ideas of glory and

shining projects, and I must confess, to my shame, that it is a too certain way of deceiving me.

"I wished to join to the few theories about war I can have, and the few dispositions nature gave, perhaps, to me, the experience of thirty campaigns, in hope that I should be able to be the more useful in the present circumstances. My desire of deserving your satisfaction is stronger than ever, and everywhere you will employ me you can be certain of my trying every exertion in my power to succeed. I am now fixed to your fate, and I shall follow it and sustain it as well by my sword as by all means in my power. You will pardon my importunity in favour of the sentiment which dictated it. Youth and friendship make me, perhaps, too warm, but I feel the greatest concern at all that has happened for some time since.

"With the most tender and profound respect, I have the honour to be, &c.

"LAFAYETTE."

To this earnest and sincere declaration of attachment, toward which the Marquis de La Fayette was evidently impelled by the highest sentiments of loyalty to the American cause, as well as of honor and devotion to his truest friend, General Washington replied upon the following day:[1]

"HEAD-QUARTERS, 31 December, 1777.

"MY DEAR MARQUIS; Your favor of yesterday conveyed to me fresh proof of that friendship and attachment, which I have happily experienced since the first of our acquaintance, and for which I entertain sentiments of the purest affection. It will ever constitute part of my happiness to know that I stand well in your opinion; because I am satisfied that you can have no views to answer by throwing out false colours, and that you possess a mind too exalted to condescend to low arts and intrigues to acquire a reputation. Happy, thrice happy, would it have been for this army, and the cause we are embarked in, if the same generous spirit had pervaded all the actors in it. But one gentleman, whose name you have mentioned, had, I am confident, far different views; his ambition and great desire of being puffed off, as one of the first officers of the age, could only be equalled by the means which he used to obtain them. But finding that I was de-

[1] Correspondence of La Fayette, American edition, i. 139.

termined not to go beyond the line of my duty to indulge him in the first,—nor to exceed the strictest rules of propriety to gratify him in the second,—he became my inveterate enemy; and he has, I am persuaded, practised every art to do me an injury, even at the expense of reprobating a measure that did not succeed, that he himself advised to. How far he may have accomplished his ends, I know not; and, except for considerations of a public nature, I care not; for, it is well known, that neither ambitious nor lucrative motives, led me to accept my present appointments, in the discharge of which, I have endeavoured to observe one steady and uniform system of conduct, which I shall invariably pursue, while I have the honour to command, regardless of the tongue of slander or the powers of detraction. The fatal tendency of disunion is so obvious, that I have, in earnest terms, exhorted such officers as have expressed their dissatisfaction at General Conway's promotion, to be cool and dispassionate in their decision about the matter; and I have hopes that they will not suffer any hasty determination to injure the service. At the same time, it must be acknowledged, that officers' feelings upon these occasions are not to be restrained, although you may control their actions.

"The other observations contained in your letter have too much truth in them; and, it is much to be lamented, that things are not now as they formerly were. But we must not, in so great a contest, expect to meet with nothing but sunshine. I have no doubt that everything happens for the best, that we shall triumph over all our misfortunes, and in the end be happy; when, my dear marquis, if you will give me your company in Virginia, we will laugh at our past difficulties and the folly of others; and I will endeavour, by every civility in my power, to shew you how much and how sincerely I am your affectionate and obedient servant."

La Fayette believed that this was a crisis in American affairs from which very grave results were to be feared by all friends of the nation. He realized the great danger which was now threatening General Washington; and, aside from his love for his commander, he was convinced, and repeatedly declared, that there was no one to fill his place: with General Washington gone, the liberty of America would have to be abandoned. These considerations actuated him for the moment beyond all others. They overcame his longing to see France again, they sup-

pressed the yearning toward his wife and children, and they determined him to remain amid the frost and hardship of Valley Forge in order to counteract any unfavorable influence that might result from his leaving at that time, and to be near General Washington if he were needed. It is evident that his private interests were calling him back to France, and that the letters of his wife and family urged him to go; and it would not have been unreasonable if he had taken advantage of the many months of inactivity which were certain to follow the close of the campaign, to return to his country after an absence of nearly a year and to embrace his dear ones whom he had left behind, at his coming away, without a farewell. But it was characteristic of La Fayette to subordinate personal impulses to his convictions of duty; and such was his course upon the present occasion.

He wrote to Madame de La Fayette, from the Camp at Valley Forge, on the 6th of January, 1778, the week after his letter to General Washington,[1]—

"What a date, my dear heart, and what a place to write you from in the month of January! In a camp, in the midst of the forest, fifteen hundred leagues away from you, I am hemmed in by the winter. Not very long ago we were separated from the enemy only by a small river; but now we are about seven leagues from them, and here the American army intends to spend the winter in their little huts that are not much more attractive than dungeon cells. I cannot tell whether it will be convenient for General Howe to make us a visit in our new settlement; but we shall try to receive him with proper consideration, if he does. The bearer of this letter will describe to you the attractive surroundings of the place I have chosen to stay in rather than to enjoy the happiness of being with you, of seeing all my friends, of having every imaginable pleasure. But seriously, dear heart, do you not believe that there must be some very strong reasons to induce me to make this sacrifice? All my feelings impelled me to go; but honor counselled me to stay here; and I am sure that after you know in detail all the circumstances of my present

[1] Correspondance, i. 143.

position, and when you understand the situation of the army, of my friend who commands it, and of the whole American cause, you will forgive me, you will approve of my course, I almost dare to say you will applaud me. What pleasure I shall have some day in telling you of all this! . . . But do not condemn me without a hearing. Besides the reason that I have given you, I have still another, which I should not mention to everybody, because it might appear that I was assuming an air of ridiculous importance. My presence is more necessary to the American cause at this moment than you may imagine; many foreigners who have failed to obtain commissions, or whose ambitious schemes after having obtained them could not be countenanced, have entered into powerful conspiracies; they have used every artifice to turn me against this revolution and against him who is its leader; and they have taken every opportunity to spread the report that I am about to leave the continent. Upon their side, the British have openly declared this to be so. I cannot with good conscience play into the hands of these people. If I were to go, many Frenchmen who are useful here would follow my example. General Washington would be really unhappy if I were to suggest my going away. His confidence in me is greater than I dare to admit on account of my age. In the position that he occupies he is in danger of being surrounded by flatterers or by secret enemies; but he knows he has in me a loyal friend to whom he may open his heart and who will always tell him the truth. Not a day passes that he does not hold a long conversation with me or write me a long letter, and he is kind enough to consult me upon the most important subjects. There is at this moment a particular matter in connection with which my presence here is useful to him. This is not the time for me to talk of going away."

Assuming then a less serious tone, M. de La Fayette continued, with his usual buoyancy of spirit,—

"You will learn from the bearer of this letter that I am in very good health, that my wound has healed, and that the change of climate has not affected me. Do you not think that, when I go home, we shall be old enough to establish ourselves in our own house, to live happily together, to entertain our friends, and that, in the midst of a delightful freedom, we shall be content to read the foreign newspapers without having the curiosity to go abroad ourselves to trace the course of passing events? I love to build

châteaux en France of happiness and pleasure. You always share them with me, dear heart, and when once we shall be together again nothing shall separate us or prevent us from enjoying the sweetness of loving each other and the most tranquil and delicious happiness. . . .

"Several of the general officers here have brought their wives to the camp. I am very envious, not of their wives, but of the pleasure they have in being able to see them. General Washington too is about to send for his wife. As for the British, they have just received a reinforcement of three hundred *demoiselles* from New York; and we captured lately one of their vessels loaded with the chaste wives of officers coming to join their husbands, who were terribly frightened lest they should be kept for the American army."

The Marquis de La Fayette's reference in this letter to his relations with General Washington is of a highly personal nature, which, as he said himself, he would not, as any other prudent man would not, declare openly before the world. But it must be remembered that this was written, in the most intimate privacy, to his wife. The earnestness of his desire to serve and assist his commander in the midst of the most trying circumstances, and his evident loyalty, expressed out of the fulness of his heart, preserve it from the suspicion of undue self-esteem. Besides, the situation was truly as he described it; he was very close to the Commander-in-Chief, and we have Washington's own testimony to his confidence in him in connection with this very subject to which La Fayette referred in his letter as "a particular matter." Writing to General Gates upon the question of the intercepted letter of Conway, General Washington declared to him that "neither this letter, nor the information which occasioned it, was ever directly or indirectly communicated by me to a single officer in this army out of my own family, excepting the Marquis de Lafayette."[1]

But, in spite of M. de La Fayette's resolution to stand

[1] Sparks, Writings of Washington, v. 492.

by the Commander-in-Chief during this crisis in his affairs, the conspirators, who were still fomenting hostility and stubbornly developing their intrigue, decided upon removing him from the head-quarters, in order to deprive General Washington of the moral weight of his presence, —with the hope, possibly, that, by flattering attentions to him, they might ultimately win him over to their side. La Fayette had come to be looked upon as in some sense the representative of France in America; for his rank as major-general naturally made him the foremost of the French officers then serving in the Continental army, whose opinions were likely to be adopted by all the others, and his distinguished position at the Court of Versailles was supposed to give him an influence there which would be very potent in the event of the participation by the French Government in the War of Independence. The party of the Cabal appear to have believed that if they could succeed in turning this influence into their own direction there was a chance that it would make them the leaders with whom the French Cabinet would treat in the negotiations which were expected to follow soon, and which were looked forward to with hopeful anticipation by all classes of people in the United States; and in that event Lee, Gates, and Conway would come forth as the great soldiers of the Revolution, who, by assuming the credit of having established an alliance which should assure the independence of America, might find an easy road to the accomplishment of their purposes, and publish themselves as the saviors of the country. At all events, if they succeeded in nothing more, they were determined to alienate that influence from General Washington; and consequently their designs were aimed, for the moment, toward the Marquis de La Fayette.

With exceeding cleverness, they hit upon a plan which would appeal more than any other to La Fayette, because it touched at once his love of France, his desire for glory

in arms, and his readiness to inflict, by his own actions, an injury upon "the hereditary enemy" of his country, whom every Frenchman feared and hated. This was an independent expedition, which he should be appointed to command, against Canada. The expedition, as we see it now, was nothing but a plot. It was not conceived with any regard to its ultimate success; and it failed because there was not a single element of success contained in it. No military genius had been employed in considering the means and methods by which a campaign of that character might be carried on, and no military preparations had been made; for there were neither forces at hand for the purpose, nor transportation or provisions with which they could have been supplied if troops enough had been brought together to make even a reasonable demonstration of attack against the enemy's country. Neglect of this kind in an actual military operation would have been disgraceful. The fact, however, that there were men in the American army, possibly also in Congress, who were capable of lending themselves to an unworthy fiction which embarrassed the Commander-in-Chief in one of the darkest hours of the war, and led to a considerable expenditure of money when the country was destitute, is lamentable indeed.

General Washington knew nothing of it until La Fayette received orders from Congress to take command; he was left intentionally in ignorance, and not only was he not consulted, but he was subjected to the mortification of seeing one of his own officers taken from him and ordered to assume an independent military command over which he, although Commander-in-Chief, should have neither supervision nor control. General Washington received at Valley Forge an official announcement of this expedition from the Board of War, and, without betraying any personal feeling at the insult thrust upon him by it, or criticising the action of Congress, he handed to the Marquis

de La Fayette the commission which had been enclosed for him as an independent commander-in-chief who should proceed at once to Congress to receive his instructions, with this simple expression of regard: "I would rather they had selected you for this than any other man." [1]

On the 22d of January, 1778, Congress had resolved "That an irruption be made into Canada, and that the Board of War be authorized to take every necessary measure for the execution of the business under such general officers as Congress shall appoint, and apply for such sums of money as may be thought by them proper and requisite for the expedition," and upon the following day they proceeded to elect Major-General the Marquis de La Fayette, Major-General Conway, and Brigadier-General Stark as the officers to conduct the "irruption into Canada." [2]

La Fayette was deceived by the promises that had been made to him as to the support he should receive throughout the expedition from Congress and the Board of War, as well as by the representations made by friends of the Cabal of the number of troops that were to be ready for him upon his arrival at Albany, which was to be his point of departure for the campaign, the preparations as to clothing, arms, ammunition, wagons, and all the necessary details of camp equipage, which he believed to have been seriously considered beforehand, but in regard to which, in point of fact, nothing had been done. The idea of wresting Canada from the British fired his mind with ambition to succeed in an undertaking which promised great opportunities for a young commander to distinguish himself before the world in his military profession. As a Frenchman he accepted with especial delight the mission to a French province, among a people whose language and attachments made them kindred to him-

[1] Mémoires de La Fayette, i. 73, Fragment C.

[2] Journals of Congress, 22d and 23d of January, 1778.

self. To give them liberty by uniting them with the thirteen free States of America was to him an exalted purpose, comparable with the best achievements in the lives of all patriots and soldiers. To have thrown off a hated domination and to have avenged, in the rescue and independence of Canada, one of the sorest humiliations of the Seven Years' War, would have made him at once a hero and would have crowned him with glory in France. Nothing could have been a greater inducement to the youthful general.

But it must be said to the honor of M. de La Fayette that, in the face of these tempting offers which were cunningly prepared to seduce him by the dazzling prospect of his own greatness, and by fame which seemed almost within his grasp, he held his loyalty supreme. Before his duty as a man he placed nothing else; his upright principles directed him into the path of right as he saw it and knew it, without regard to self. He would not turn against Washington.

Immediately upon the receipt of his commission, he declared that he should not accept it if by so doing he were to be removed from the Commander-in-Chief, and he wrote to Congress that he must decline the command they had offered him unless he could remain under the orders of General Washington and report directly to him. He also presented himself to the committee of Congress, who happened at that time to be visiting the camp, and emphatically announced to them that nothing could induce him to separate himself from the General, but that he should rather stay with him, even as an aide-de-camp, than accept any independent commission which they might present to him. He replied to Congress, in a formal communication addressed to that body, that he would accept the command of the expedition to Canada upon condition that he should be subordinate to General Washington and considered merely as one of his officers detached for a special service,

also that he should report directly to the General in the first instance and should make the reports of his operations to Congress *in duplicate*, but not otherwise. These conditions were accepted, to the gratification of M. de La Fayette, who thereupon made preparations to start at once, in the dead of winter, upon a campaign which, whatever might have been its promises of success, must necessarily have entailed enormous hardship.[1]

The instructions sent to him by General Gates, as President of the Board of War, were as follows:

"*Instructions for the Marquis de La Fayette, Major-General in the Army of the United States, commanding an expedition to Canada.*[2]

"The Troops selected for the above service consist of the following Corps, viz.

Brigadier General Nixon's Brigade.
Colonel Van Schaick's Regiment.
Colonel Warner's do
Colonel J. Livingston's do
Colonel Hazen's do
Colonel Bedel's do
Capt. Whitcomb's Rangers —

"These Corps will, at a low estimate, make Two Thousand Five Hundred Combatants; and all, except Bedel's Regiment, will rendezvous at Bennington.

"That will march from Co-os, where it is raised, to the mouth of Onion River; the place appointed for the General Rendezvous. As most of the troops ordered for this service have been upon duty in Canada, there will be no want of any other guides than such as may be chosen from them. General Stark, Colonel Warner and Colo. Bedel, with the Assist. Depy. Qr. Master General, Colonel Hazen, know every road, pass, and post, in the country. You have only to consult with them, as you advance, and, if absolutely necessary, upon your Retreat.

"Colonel Greaton, the Commanding Officer at Albany, has directions, in concert with the Qr. Master General, the Commy. Genl. and the Commander of the Artillery at Albany, to provide Ammunition, Provisions, Stores and as many Carriages as may

[1] Mémoires de ma Main, i. 39 and 72.
[2] Department of State, Papers of the Old Congress.

be requisite for the intended service. Colonel Hazen is sent forward to expedite the execution of these orders. You need, therefore, be under no concern, for supplies.

"As success will depend, principally, upon the vigor, and alertness, with which the enterprise is conducted, the Board recommend it to you to lose no time. The rapidity of your motions, and the consternation of the enemy, will do the business.

"The season of the year being severe, though healthy, the commissary of clothing, at Albany, is ordered to furnish all the woolens, and every comfort his stores can afford. You will constantly be in the woods, at night, where the troops are so well acquainted with the mode of covering themselves, that you will find tents unnecessary and cumbersome.

"The proper officers are now providing Forage, at the general and particular places of rendezvous.

"Upon your gaining possession of St. Johns or Montreal, you will publish a Declaration of your Intentions to the Canadians, and invite them to join the Army of the United States. Colo. Hazen's Regiment, of four battalions, is to be first compleated to the establishment; and the officers and soldiers who enlist are to be allowed the bounty, and reward, offered them by Congress in their Resolution of 1776.—Unless you shall be of opinion, after considering the political complexion of the inhabitants, that it is not a proper crisis for inviting the Canadians to take an open part with these States; in which case you will publish a Manifesto, requiring a strict neutrality on the part of the Canadians; and suggesting such other considerations, as you shall deem adapted to the situation of affairs.

"If, upon your entering Canada, you find a general disinclination of the natives, to join the American Standard, you will destroy all the Works and Vessels, at St. Johns, Chamblee and the Isle Aux Noix, and retire by the best route, to the settlement, thence to Saratoga, and our present advanced posts on the Wood Creek and Hudson's River.

"If, on the contrary, the Canadians are ardently desirous of assisting to establish the Freedom, and Independence of America, you will inform them, that when they embark in the Common Cause, they must determine to receive the Resolves of Congress, and the Currency of America, with that Reverence, and Alacrity, which have ever been manifested in the Acts and Dealings of the Subjects of the United States.

"They are then to be requested to send Delegates, to represent their State in the Congress of the United States, and to conform,

in all political respects, to the Union, and Confederation, established in them.

"In taking possession of Montreal, which is a principal object of this expedition, you will take into your possession, for the use of the public, all the Arms, Ammunition, and Warlike Stores, together with all the linnens, woolens and Indian goods, that may be found, in, or near the City of Montreal; making such allowances for the private property, so secured, as you shall think most consistent with justice and sound policy, and the merits of the respective individuals, to which they belong. In transacting this business, you will take effectual care, to prevent every species of plunder and embezzlement; as these may tend to raise suspicions, in the minds of the Canadians, that may be both dishonourable, and prejudicial to the interest of the United States.

"This Board would suggest to you the propriety of calling upon the Governor, Senate and Assembly of the State of New York, now sitting at Poughkepsie, on your way to Albany, and taking their advice upon all such matters as may contribute to the glory and success of your expedition."

In connection with these Instructions, from which General de La Fayette was justified in believing that the undertaking had been honestly conceived and thoroughly provided for, in every military requisite, at least, that the season of the year demanded and the state of the country would permit, there is a curious paper still preserved in the Archives of the United States, endorsed "Additional Instructions to the Marquis de La Fayette—signed in the hand writing of General Gates,"[1] the seeming contradictoriness of which, when compared with the avowed purposes of the expedition as set forth above, in which the conquest of Canada, the taking of Montreal, and the union of that people with the United States are prominently held out to La Fayette as the objects which he was to make an effort to attain, bears evidence of the insincerity which, without question, permeated the whole scheme. In this paper the expedition is reported to Congress as a mere predatory incursion, stripped entirely

[1] Department of State, MSS., Papers of the Old Congress.

of the inducements which alone enlisted La Fayette in the undertaking. It reads as follows:

"To these Instructions is superadded a cautionary one representing to the Marquis, That the primary object is a mere Incursion or Ravage with a view to destroy the enemy's shipping and stores and to bring away or destroy all such goods as will be of service to the enemy and if brought off as will be useful to the Army of the U. States, and therefore that, if, upon attempting the enterprise, the Marquis shall be of opinion from all circumstances that it is not prudent to proceed on so large a scale as that before mentioned, he will go no farther than a Ravage and bring his troops off after doing what injury he can to the enemy, their vessels, stores or effects.

"As this Addition is now mislaid, this Board have sent the effect or tenor of it from their memory, that Congress may not be delayed from having all the information the Board can give.

"HORATIO GATES,
"*President.*"

As the Marquis de La Fayette has made no mention in his Mémoires and published Correspondence of this "cautionary" instruction, it is possible that he never received it, since the document is said to have been "mislaid;" or that, if he did receive it, he gave it no serious attention, because he was convinced at the time that he was being dealt with in good faith; indeed, he had no reason then to suspect the contrary. But in the light of subsequent events the idea suggests itself that this was artfully conceived in order to dull the edge of expectation in Congress as to a military enterprise that had been allowed to attract very considerable attention, and to shield the Board of War against responsibility for its failure, which, from the nature of the circumstances, must inevitably come, and did come, shortly afterward.

Nevertheless, La Fayette, after consultation with General Washington, began immediately his preparations to set out. In order to cross Lake Champlain upon the ice and to return, it was important for him to move at the

very earliest moment; and, though the month of January was already gone, he had still to make the long journey from the heart of Pennsylvania to Albany before he could even lay out the plan of his campaign in detail. General Conway, it will be observed, had been selected to accompany him as one of the commanding officers of the expedition, not at the request or with the knowledge of General de La Fayette, but upon the instigation of the Board of War; and in this selection is very probably to be found one of the leading motives of the scheme. In the insidious atmosphere of Conway's flatteries and promises, far removed from the personal influences of the Commander-in-Chief, amid new scenes in which he was to be permitted to amuse himself into forgetfulness of former attachments by the vanity aroused through having become himself a central figure, it was hoped that his allegiance might gradually be weakened, and that he would fall a victim to the cunning of intrigue. It must be confessed, the plan was well conceived; but it was measured to a smaller man than the Marquis de La Fayette. He would not accept of General Conway as his adviser; he surrounded himself with friends of his own among the Frenchmen then in the American service, and he petitioned and obtained the consent of Congress to attach to the expedition Major-General the Baron de Kalb, as a companion and adviser in whom he had confidence. Thus he defeated the plot.

In General Gates's own house, in the presence of the conspirators who were known to be of the Cabal, La Fayette boldly proposed the health of General Washington and called upon them to drink it; which they did, reddening with shame.[1]

He wrote the following letter to the President of Congress:[2]

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[1] Mémoires de ma Main, i. 39.

[2] Department of State, MSS., Papers of the Old Congress.

"YORKTOWN, this 31 January, 1778.

"DEAR SIR,—I beg you would receive yourself and present to the honorable Congress my warmest thanks for the mark of confidence they have honored me with in appointing me to the command of a Northern Army. I schall be very happy if circumstances, I mean such ways of succeeding as will be granted to my desires on every point, enable me to accept a favor which I have received with the most sincere gratefulness—as soon as I received notice of the propositions which were made to me by the Board of War, I desired the opinion of the gentlemen from Congress who were in camp, and seeing them convinced as well as myself that I should come here before going to Albany, I got this leave from his excellency G^al Washington, and I repaired to this place in order to know in which light I could consider the expedition proposed to me against Montreal.

"I have been surprised to receive the news of my appointment, and the instructions of my commission by any other hand than this of my general—it engaged me to make this very stranger to my mind and very strange in itself reflexion, that I was not perhaps looked on as a detachment of his excellency's army under his immediate command—however I hope that idea was groundless and I find even it was a ridiculous one.—I look upon it as a much higher honor and a much pleasanter satisfaction for me, to be considered only as an officer of his, under his immediate orders, than if I was in any other light—it is not for satisfying my own pride that I speak so, but for the advantage of the thing in itself, and for complying to the sentiments which I know to be in the hearts of all the *frenchmen* who are to come along with me.

"It is, Sir, an highly pleasant idea for me to think of a large parcell of my countrymen, driving theyr natural and tyrannical ennemy out of the lands they had taken from 'em, and enjoying all the advantages of liberty, by theyr strict union with thirteen other states—how happy I would be had I the satisfaction of being an instrument of such a revolution, my love for the freedom of mankind in general, and in this particular instance, my consanguinity with the Canadians, and the name of frenchman I am honored with, will be sufficient proofs,—if I had believed that I am not sent for doing good and right to the Canadians, then I should not have hesitated an instant to decline this commission—but as I am fully convinced that I would promote theyr happiness as well as the advantage of the United States, I shall undertake it with the greatest chearfulness, if those means are taken which I think proper to succeed—it is far from the temper of my mind

to accept the governement of any business which I could not carry to my own honor, and the utility of the people who have put theyr confidence in me.

"g^nl Gates has been pleased to communicate to me one part of the project—other instructions will come soon in my hands—but I was anxious to make as soon as possible my thanks to the honorable Congress, and in the same time to let them know which were some of my sentiments about this matter. I went for that purpose as soon as I received the letter of the h^ble Board of War.

"I shall make use with the greatest pleasure of the liberty which has been granted to me of taking along with us some of the frenchmen who are here and to choose those I am more acquainted with. I dare answer that the Unit States will be satisfied with theyr services, and the Canadians pleased with theyr manners and good examples. I enclose here the list which I have been permitted to make out. We know all that the name of french men imposes to us great duties to deserve it, but no exertions will be forgotten on our part to show ourselves worthy of the country we have had the advantage to be born in.

"I entertain the hope that such a collection of frenchmen among whom some are not unknown to the english nation, going for helping Canadians against the common ennemy, will spread troublesome reflexions in the hearts of many in theyr ministry, and be of some weight for declaring war to france—this I desire heartily because I am fully convinced that it is the advantage of my country to take now a more active part in the present contest.

"The honorable Congress will give me leave to mention them, as a thing of the highest moment that for my operations, principally for my councils, and for giving to me theyr advices I have not a sufficient number of general officers with those whom I find the Congress and Board of War have been pleased to appoint to me—the only troops who will be at or about Albany are more numerous than any division is now in the Army and if we have some succès I understand it will increase every day amasingly—but it is the least matter, and we must not so much consider the number of men as the importance of our business—there will be great many instances where I'l want the advice and exertions of more than two g^nl officers. I think it is as much of my duty as of my delicacy to confess all what I should need, before the same men who appointed me, and with the succès of the enterprise—I had desired General M^c douggal, not that I am very intimately acquainted with him, but by the knowledge I have of his rigid and imperturbable virtue—the state of his health would not permit

his going now in a so cold country—but there is the baron de Kalb who has seen more war than any officer in the continent, who came over with me, who if I was to point out any of the general officers who are to be in that expedition, had an indubitable right to my mentioning his name—he desires to come with me; he will be much more useful to America if he is employed there —I take the liberty of recommending that in the most strongest terms, not at all because there where are more than two brigadiers it seems it should be two Major Generals, but because I think very firmly that for the good of the service and the succès of the enterprise it is of the highest importance and of an absolute necessity.

"You will find me, Sir, very difficult and rather too cautious —but it come chiefly from my being strongly convinced how far indebted I am to the Congress of the United States for the confidence they honor me with—I want to deserve it, and when matters will be settled, then no exertion schall be forgotten on my part for showing myself worthy of such a commission—my first step towards Albany will be decisive for my fate—therefore I must avoid any inconsidered one—if before venturing myself to it I would not insist upon the means of succès I look upon as necessary, then myself and the french officers, whose attachment has connected theyr going there with my having taking that command, we schould take the place of men who could perhaps give a greater weight to that expedition in europe, gain better the hearts of the Canadians, and engage them with little difficulty to raise up against the common ennemy.

"When I will get the detail of my instructions, the returns of my resources of every kind, and as many intelligences as I can get from the board of War, then the board will give me leave to consider deeply which objections I can make (for the advantage for the expedition) to what schould be granted to me—Knowing the just time at which things will be ready is by circumstances of the highest importance, the quantity and quality of cloathing, of arms which will be delivered to our soldiers, those which are destinated for as many soldiers as will be in our party, and as many Canadians as will serve under the American colours, our magasines, stores of every kind, our provisions, waggons, horses &c. &c. are things of which a single one may throw down all the enterprise—but as it is not prohibited to look in a fair prospect as far as it can go, if circumstances would permit to us a longer stay, if a siége of a greater importance was thought proper and ordered by Congress then other steps should be taken and foreseen—there

is one thing of the greatest importance to provide for—it is to prevent the ennemy coming up in our rear or obliging us by the least motion to make a precipitate retreat—by my being sent there on a political as well as a military [view] I am [intens] to beg to Congress instructions from themselves for what I am to do in that [former] way—and to give me officers to whom I can have the greatest confidence on every respect—what I promise must be relligiously kept, and my honor as well as my love for the french blood obliges me to take care not to make the least misunderstanding, as many things as can be foreseen, I want to have them cleared—for the others I fancy some liberty will be granted to me, and then I'l judge according to my conscience and the advice of every honest man and warm friend to the american cause I may consult—

"I fancy that I will get the answers Congress will be pleased to make to the several articles of this letter about in the same time that my most interesting business with the board will be done—then, Sir, if I can hope to satisfy the views of Congress and the feelings of my own heart, I'l repair immediately to camp, and after taking the leave and the last orders of my general, I'l go as far as possible with the officers who are to follow me, to the place where I hope to show by my conduct my gratefulness and my warm attachement for the United States of America.

"With the highest regard I have the honor to be,

"Sir,

"Your most obedient servant,

"THE Ms DE LAFAYETTE."

Truly it was a pity to waste so good a disposition in so poor a cause. It is probable that an attack upon Canada in the winter-time, when the British were not prepared for active operations, would have been productive of good results if it had been made by a sufficiently large and well-equipped force; and there can be no doubt that an army led by the Marquis de La Fayette, among whose officers were many Frenchmen, some of them distinguished soldiers known by reputation to the Canadians, would have had considerable advantage over almost any other in winning the friendship and co-operation of the inhabitants. But it is also true that the whole available resources of the United States would not have sufficed

at that moment to provide for, and properly to equip, such an expedition; and none knew this better than the Board of War.

Nevertheless, La Fayette set out with a hopeful heart and a firm determination to succeed. On the 3d of February, 1778, he left the town of York, in Pennsylvania, where Congress then was, and, crossing the Susquehanna River, which was packed with floating ice, he mounted his horse and started with his guide upon the long journey of nearly four hundred miles that was to take him to Albany.

The weather was intensely cold; the roads were bad, and his progress was very difficult as he advanced, sometimes in a sleigh, sometimes on horseback, weary and wet and exposed to all the changes of an inclement season. It was much harder than he had expected, this winter work in a Northern climate; he realized it only after he had made the trial. But it shows the steadiness of his purpose that, having discovered the growing difficulties of his task, he still went on.

About a week after leaving York, he wrote to General Washington, from Flemington, in New Jersey,[1]—

"I go on very slowly; sometimes drenched by rain, sometimes covered by snow, and not entertaining many handsome thoughts about the projected incursion into Canada; if successes were to be had, it would surprise me in a most agreeable manner by that very reason that I don't expect any shining ones. Lake Champlain is too cold for producing the least bit of laurel, and if I am not starved I shall be as proud as if I had gained three battles. . . . Could I believe, for one single instant that this pompous command *of a northern army* will let your excellency forget a little us absent friends, then I would send the project to the place it comes from. But I dare hope that you will remember me sometimes. I wish you, very heartily, the greatest public and private happiness and successes. It is a very melancholy idea for me that I

[1] Correspondence, American edition, i. 153; Letter of 9th February, 1778.

cannot follow your fortunes as near your person as I could wish; but my heart will take, very sincerely, its part of everything which can happen to you, and I am already thinking of the agreeable moment when I may come down to assure your excellency of the most tender affection and highest respect."

Finally, after struggling on against the severity of the winter, La Fayette arrived in Albany on the 17th of February, but only to find that he had been deceived, and to learn with mortification that his bright anticipation of glorious service in behalf of the United States and for the honor of France was but a dream. Instead of the enthusiasm he expected on every side, he met nothing but discouragement from those he counted upon. He had been spurred on by General Gates to hasten his journey, lest General Stark should have preceded him upon the expedition and should have destroyed the British fleet before his arrival; but, to his amazement, when he reached Albany, General Stark seemed never to have heard of the undertaking. General Conway, who had arrived a few days before, the official representative of the Board of War, with whom this enterprise originated, received M. de La Fayette with the curt announcement that the matter was not to be thought of; and La Fayette had the testimony of experienced officers, like General Schuyler, General Lincoln, and Benedict Arnold (the latter of whom knew, as well as any man then alive, the difficulties of an expedition into Canada), that it would be impossible to succeed in this attempt.[1]

The ardent young soldier discovered that he had been entrapped. In bitter disappointment, he saw himself artfully removed from the companionship of his beloved friend, the Commander-in-Chief, for a purpose which he began now but too clearly to understand; and, with a heavy heart, he realized that, in spite of his heroic efforts

[1] See also the letter of Benedict Arnold to Gouverneur Morris, 2d February, 1778,—Appendix B.

to carry out the plan he had in mind, he must perforce content himself to give it up.

His correspondence, which fortunately has been preserved to us, tells the story best in the language in which he put it. Two days after his arrival at Albany, he wrote to General Washington,[1]—

"Dear General,—Why am I so far from you and what business had the board of War to hurry me through the ice and snow without knowing what I should do, neither what they were doing themselves? You have thought, perhaps, that their project would be attended with some difficulty, that some means had been neglected, that I could not obtain all the success and the immensity of laurels which they had promised to me; but I defy your excellency to conceive any idea of what I have seen since I left the place where I was quiet and near my friends, to run myself through all the blunders of madness or treachery, (God knows what). Let me begin the journal of my fine and glorious campaign.

"According to Lord Stirling's advice, I went by Coryell's Ferry to Ringo's tavern, where Mr. Duer had given me a rendezvous; but there no Duer was to be found, and they did never hear from him. From thence I proceeded by the State of New York and had the pleasure of seeing the friends of America as warm in their love for the Commander-in-Chief as his best friend could wish. I spoke to Governor Clinton, and was much satisfied with that gentleman. At length I met Albany, the 17th, though I was not expected before the 25th. General Conway had been here only three days before me, and I must confess I found him very active and looking as if he had good intentions; but we know a great deal upon that subject. His first word has been that the expedition is quite impossible. I was at first very diffident of this report, but have found that he was right. Such is, at least, the idea I can form of this ill-concerted operation within these two days.

"General Schuyler, General Lincoln, General Arnold, had written, before my arrival, to General Conway, in the most expressive terms, that, in our present circumstances, there was no possibility to begin, now, an enterprise into Canada. Hay, deputy quarter-master-general; Cuyler, deputy-commissary-general; Mearsin, deputy clothier-general, in what they call the

[1] 19th February, 1778, Correspondence of La Fayette, American edition, i. 154.

northern department, are entirely of the same opinion. Colonel Hazen, who has been appointed to a place which interferes with the three others above mentioned, was the most desirous of going there. The reasons of such an order I think I may attribute to other motives. The same Hazen confesses we are not strong enough to think of the expedition in this moment. As to the troops, they are disgusted, and (if you except some Hazen's Canadians) reluctant, to the utmost degree, to begin a winter incursion in a so cold country—I have consulted everybody, and everybody answers me that it would be madness to undertake this operation.

"I have been deceived by the board of War; they have, by the strongest expressions, promised to me three thousand, and (what is more to be depended upon) they have assured me in writing, *two thousand and five hundred combatants, at a low estimate.* Now, Sir, I do not believe I can find *in all* twelve hundred fit for duty, and most part of those very men are naked, even for a summer's campaign. I was to find General Stark with a large body, and indeed General Gates had told to me, *General Stark will have burnt the fleet before your arrival.* Well, the first letter I receive in Albany is from General Stark, who wishes to know *what number of men, from whence, for what time, for what rendezvous, I desire him to raise.* Colonel Bedel, who was to rise too, would have done something *had he received money.* One asks, what encouragement his people will have, the other has no clothes; not one of them has received a dollar of what was due to them. I have applied to every body, I have begged at every door I could these two days, and I see that I could do something were the expedition to be begun in five weeks. But you know we have not an hour to lose, and indeed it is now rather too late, had we everything in readiness.

"There is a spirit of dissatisfaction prevailing among the soldiers, and even the officers, which is owing to their not being paid for some time since. This department is much indebted, and as near as I can ascertain, for so a short time, I have already discovered near eight hundred thousand dollars due to the Continental troops, some militia, the quarter-master's department &c. &c. It was with four hundred thousand dollars, only the half of which is arrived to-day, that I was to undertake the operation, and satisfy the men under my commands. I send to Congress the account of those debts. Some clothes, by Colonel Hazen's activity, are arrived from Boston, but not enough by far, and the greatest part is cut off.

"We have had intelligence from a deserter, who makes the enemy stronger than I thought. There is no such thing *as straw on board the vessels to burn them.* I have sent to Congress a full account of the matter; I hope it will open their eyes. What they will resolve upon I do not know, but I think I must wait here for their answer. I have enclosed to the president, copies of the most important letters I had received. It would be tedious for your excellency, were I to undertake the minutest detail of everything; it will be sufficient to say that the want of men, clothes, money, and the want of time, deprives me of all hopes as to this excursion. If it may begin again in the month of June, by the east, I cannot venture to assure; but for the present moment such is the idea I conceive of the famous incursion, as far as I may be informed in so short a time.

"Your excellency may judge that I am very distressed by this disappointment. My being appointed to the command of the expedition is known through the continent, it will be soon known in Europe, as I have been desired, by members of Congress, to write to my friends; my being at the head of an army, people will be in great expectations, and what shall I answer?

"I am afraid it will reflect on my reputation, and I shall be laughed at. My fears upon that subject are so strong, that I would choose to become again only a volunteer, unless Congress offers the means of mending this ugly business by some glorious operation; but I am very far from giving to them the least notice upon that matter. General Arnold seems very fond of a diversion against New York, and he is too sick to take the field before four or five months. I should be happy if something was proposed to me in that way, but I will never ask, nor even seem desirous, of anything directly from Congress; for you, dear general, I know very well, that you will do everything to procure me the only thing I am ambitious of—glory.

"I think your excellency will approve of my staying here till further orders, and of my taking the liberty of sending my despatches to Congress by a very quick occasion, without going through the hands of my general; but I was desirous to acquaint them early of my disagreeable and ridiculous situation.

"With the greatest affection and respect,

"I have the honour to be, &c."

M. de La Fayette decided, as we have seen, to stay in Albany, not only because he was awaiting further orders from the Board of War, to whom he immediately commu-

nicated his situation, but also because he still entertained the hope that something might yet be done to justify his having gone there, and, as he said to General Conway,[1] "by every exertions when I can find any probability not to ruin, or dishonour the troops under my command."

His earnest appeals to General Gates, to whom, as President of the Board of War and his superior officer, he showed at least the courtesy of assuming that he also had been misled as to the preparations for the expedition, contain repeated expressions of his anxiety to accomplish, in one way or another, some effective result. He persuaded himself that he might have succeeded, in spite of all obstacles, if only time enough had been given him; and, chafing under enforced idleness and disappointment, he discussed various plans of action, not practicable under the circumstances, which served but to prove the hopelessness of his case. Of these were the diversion against New York to which he referred in his letter to General Washington, and an incursion into Canada for the mere purpose of burning the British fleet. He wrote to General Gates,[2]—

"I confess I was perhaps too sanguine in my hopes, or too quick in my feelings when I saw them deceived; but consider, Sir, the charming prospect I had before my eyes, and you will conceive how concerned I must be on this occasion. What hurts me more is to think that we want only time, and was I in the month of January I would be certain of carrying the business. I dare say you will be yourself very surprised to see things so different from what they had been represented to you and you had represented to me—be certain, Sir, I was never so unhappy as in this circumstance, tho' the general opinion of every rank and condition in the civil as well as the military line assures me that I could not do anything in our present situation.

"However I cannot give up all idea of doing something in that quarter. I hear every scheme on this subject and find very little probabilities of succès—no body thinks the grand expedition

[1] Letter of 19th February, 1778: New York Historical Society.

[2] 23d February, 1778: Gates Papers, New York Historical Society.

could be carried, but some speak of burning the fleet by surprise with a detachment—General Conway is much against it, and I confess it seems to me he is in right—tho' doing or trying nothing in this moment is exasperating to the last degree. . . . Fort Schuyler should be provided for six months, I'l go to that fort, and I'l have the honor to write you how I have found it.—It seems to me that the people is rather proud of an expedition against New York—I am told that in the month of June there is a very easy way into the heart of Canada, in everything you believe I'l be useful to the American cause, till the moment perhaps not very far where my business will oblige me to leave this continent, be certain, Sir, that I shall always be ready; and I dare say where I am obliged to stop nobody will go on."

It appears also from M. de La Fayette's letters to General Gates, as if to add irrefragable proof of the disgraceful lack of principle upon the part of those concerned in ordering this expedition to be undertaken, that, while no provision had been made for the munitions of war and supplies with which to equip the army, the money which had been promised to the young commander for this purpose was not provided for him, as indeed, under existing circumstances, it could not have been. The pay of the troops was far in arrears, as we have seen; the quartermaster's department and the commissary's were bare; and, although M. de La Fayette reported to General Washington the arrival of a sum much smaller than he expected for the equipment of his command, he discovered, upon the first demand made in that direction, that even this was not for him. So greatly was he disturbed by this, to him, presumable mischance, that he freely offered his private credit to be used in supplying pressing wants. He wrote to General Gates,[1] "every body is after me for monney—be so good as to let me know how I must do—I have given leave to every one in public departments if they could borrow on my private credit

[1] 23d February and 11th March, 1778: Gates Papers, New York Historical Society.

for paying their debts, to do it without difficulty." And "we want monney, Sir, and monney will be spoken of by me till I will be enabled to pay our poor soldiers, not only justice and humanity but even prudence obliges us to satisfy them soon; all the monney goes by other ways. I have seen a letter to Colonel Hay where you tell him that the very same 400,000 dollars you told me were for me, are destinated to him. . . . I was a little distressed to know how to employ the monney which I thought was for *the expedition* till I saw in one of your letters to C^l. Hay that it was coming for the department." No wonder he wrote to General Gates,[1] "I expect with the greater impatience letters from Congress and the Board of War where I'l be acquainted of what I am to do. I hope the good intentions of honorable Board in my favor could be employed in a better occasion—indeed, Sir, there has been good deal of deception and neglect in that affair."

In the mean time the season wore away; the months of February and March passed, and General de La Fayette occupied himself at Albany with such duties as he could find there to do, aiding, in the mean time, the garrison of Fort Schuyler with provisions and clothing, and, at the invitation of General Schuyler, going up the Mohawk Valley to attend a notable council of Indians. La Fayette made terms of friendship with the Oneidas and the Tuscaroras especially. His manners and appearance pleased them so greatly that they adopted him into their tribes, giving to him the name of *Kayewla*, formerly borne by one of their warriors; after which, in order to strengthen the attachment of these people to the American cause, he acceded to their request that they should be allowed to have a fort of their own, and he detached one of his best engineers, M. de Gouvion, to construct it for them.[2] Thus he made an effort to face with a manly heart

[1] Gates Papers, New York Historical Society.
[2] Mémoires de ma Main, i. 44.

the unfortunate circumstances, which he called, in a letter to General Washington, "my distressing, ridiculous, foolish, and, indeed, nameless situation,"[1]—to which the General replied, encouraging him by assurances of friendship and esteem, and soothing with the utmost tenderness the injuries caused by disappointment and mortification to his over-sensitive nature.

Washington's letter of the 10th of March[2] seems, in its solicitous tenderness, like one written by a father to his son:

"My dear Marquis,—I have had the pleasure of receiving your two favours of the 19th and 23d of February, and hasten to dispel those fears respecting your reputation, which are excited only by an uncommon degree of sensibility. You seem to apprehend that censure, proportioned to the disappointed expectations of the world, will fall on you in consequence of the Canadian expedition. But, in the first place, it will be no disadvantage to you to have it known in Europe that you had received so manifest a proof of the good opinion and confidence of Congress as an important detached command; and I am persuaded that every one will applaud your prudence in renouncing a project, in pursuing which you would vainly have attempted physical impossibilities; indeed, unless you can be chargeable with the invariable effects of natural causes, and be arraigned for not suspending the course of the seasons, to accommodate your march over the lake, the most prompt to slander can have nothing to found blame upon.

"However sensibly your ardour for glory may make you feel this disappointment, you may be assured that your character stands as fair as ever it did, and that no new enterprise is necessary to wipe off this imaginary stain. The expedition which you hint at I think unadvisable in our present circumstances. Anything in the way of a formal attack, which would necessarily be announced to the enemy by preparatory measures, would not be likely to succeed. If a stroke is meditated in that quarter, it must be effected by troops stationed at a proper distance for availing themselves of the first favourable opportunity offered by the enemy, and success would principally depend upon the suddenness of the attempt. This, therefore, must rather be the effect

[1] 23d February, 1778: Correspondence, American edition, i. 159.
[2] La Fayette's Correspondence, American edition, i. 161.

of time and chance than premeditation. You undoubtedly have determined judiciously in waiting the further orders of Congress. Whether they allow me the pleasure of seeing you shortly, or destine you to a longer absence, you may assure yourself of the sincere good wishes of,

"Dear Sir, &c.

"P.S. Your directing payment of such debts as appear to be most pressing is certainly right—There is not money enough to answer every demand; and I wish your supplies of clothing had been better. Your ordering a large supply of provisions into Fort Schuyler was a very judicious measure, and I thank you for it."

La Fayette's exile to Albany terminated shortly afterward. The influence of the Cabal was weakening to its dissolution in the face of the universal attachment of the people to the person of General Washington. Slander and intrigue could not shake the confidence which they had in his ability to lead them through the perils of their struggle for liberty and ultimately to triumph, in the independence of the United States.

Conway, deserted by his former associates, without influence, without official position, hated and mistrusted, made a humble apology to General Washington for what he had said and done; and he finally left this country in disgrace to return to France.

Better influences now prevailing, Congress resolved that the Canadian expedition was impracticable and should be abandoned, directing at the same time that the Marquis de La Fayette and Baron de Kalb should return to the army. In justice to La Fayette, it was resolved "That Congress entertain a high sense of his prudence, activity, and zeal, and that they are fully persuaded nothing has or would have been wanting on his part, or on the part of his officers who accompanied him, to give the expedition the utmost possible effect."[1]

[1] Secret Journal of Congress, March 2, 1778.

With infinite relief La Fayette set out upon his return, and he arrived without accident at the head-quarters in Valley Forge, early in April, in time to learn the news which filled his soul with pride, and which was then being hailed with joy throughout the land, that of the alliance of the United States of America with His Most Christian Majesty of France.

CHAPTER IX.

ALLIANCE BETWEEN FRANCE AND THE UNITED STATES.

The political activity of the Cabinet of Versailles during the greater part of the year 1777 was directed toward an effort to return to the situation which had been reached in the month of October of 1776, when the diplomacy of the Comte de Vergennes had prepared the way for united action upon the part of the two monarchies against Great Britain, and when the French Secretary of State, alarmed by the reports of American defeat on Long Island, had suddenly held back at the moment that the Spanish Court was ready to accept his policy of intervention in the War of Independence.

Spain, as we have seen, retired from the position which her Government had assumed through the Marqués de Grimaldi, and under the more conservatively Spanish administration of his successor, the Conde de Floridablanca, her ministry was less inclined to regard the interests of the kingdom as identical with those of France in matters of colonial policy or in its relations to England. Besides this, it will be remembered, Spanish national pride had been seriously offended by the unexpected rejection on the part of M. de Vergennes of the assent of King Carlos III. to a policy which had been incessantly urged by the arguments and persuasions of the French Foreign Office.

In order to induce the Court of Madrid to resume its attitude of sympathy and co-operation, the Comte de Vergennes found himself, therefore, obliged to do much of his former work a second time. He proceeded in this en-

deavor with skilful method and with remarkable diligence, in carrying along his diplomatic correspondence, as the French Archives fully attest, by a series of documents relating to the affairs of France and Spain and America, which messengers were constantly bearing from Versailles to Madrid, with every conceivable argument for union of action under the Family Compact, derived from the progress of affairs in the United States or the results of party feeling in England.

Circumstances were greatly changed, however, and, in spite of his efforts, he did not meet this time with success. The Government of Spain was not inclined toward war with Great Britain. On the one hand, its relations with Portugal were considerably improved; for, the King of Portugal having died, the source of irritation which had arisen from the policy of his minister, M. de Pombal, who now lost his influence at that Court, was removed. But, on the other hand, what was of much more serious consideration in Madrid was that the Spanish Colonies in the West Indies were not protected sufficiently against hostile attack, and the great treasure-fleet of Spain, with a cargo valued at some fifty millions of piasters, was preparing to return from Mexico, and, in the event of war, would be exposed upon the high seas to capture or destruction. Therefore, even if the Spanish ministry were inclined to break the existing peace, it could not afford to do so at once, with the risk of endangering these enormous interests of its own. Its diplomatic correspondence in regard to the situation, and in reply to M. de Vergennes, was long, wearisome, and dilatory.

In the mean time, the attitude of France toward the struggle in the United States had not changed. It was still one of sympathy, of secret encouragement and assistance, with the promise of open recognition as soon as France should have strengthened herself sufficiently by the co-operation of Spain, or by her own efforts to increase

her land forces and to improve her navy, or when England should be weakened by the opposition which she met with in America. True, the Comte de Vergennes had changed the appearance of his relations with the Agents of Congress accordingly as circumstances made it necessary for him to deal with Great Britain; but there is no evidence that he ever wavered in his purpose of sustaining the Revolution and ultimately of participating in the war.

His desire to secure the co-operation of Spain grew more intense because he dared not venture alone into a declaration of hostilities, and yet he was becoming fearful that unless the Colonies obtained speedy relief they must be forced by their necessities into submission to the mother-country and might accept the conciliatory measures which Parliament was then ready to offer for peace. In the event of a reconciliation, the opportunity of France for vengeance would be gone; and, besides this, the Secretary of State thought it possible that a new danger to her welfare might arise from the turning upon her by Great Britain of all its reunited forces, in punishment for the political offence she had committed by secretly aiding the rebellion.

The American Commissioners in France very quickly grasped the situation, and they took advantage of this argument, almost immediately after the arrival of Dr. Franklin in Paris, to enforce their representations of the state of affairs at home, with a solemnity which unquestionably had its influence at Versailles, where the subject had already been discussed with apprehension in the Cabinet. In the formal appeal for ships of the line, for troops, and for munitions of war which they addressed to M. de Vergennes on the 5th of January, 1777,[1] they said to the minister,—

[1] Diplomatic Correspondence, Wharton, ii. 245.

"We also beg it may be particularly considered, that while the English are masters of the American seas, and can, without fear of interruption, transport with such ease their army from one part of our extensive coast to another, and we can only meet them by land marches, we may possibly, unless some powerful aid is given us or some strong diversion be made in our favor, be so harassed and be put to such immense distress, as that finally our people will find themselves reduced to the necessity of ending the war by an accommodation.

"The Courts of France and Spain may rely with the fullest confidence that whatever stipulations are made by us in case of granting such aid, will be ratified and punctually fulfilled by the Congress, who are determined to found their future character, with regard to justice and fidelity, on a full and perfect performance of all their present engagements.

"North America now offers to France and Spain her amity and commerce. She is also ready to guaranty in the firmest manner to those nations all their present possessions in the West Indies, as well as those they shall acquire from the enemy in a war that may be consequential of such assistance as she requests. The interests of the three nations are the same. The opportunity of cementing them and of securing all the advantages of that commerce, which in time will be immense, now presents itself. If neglected, it may never again return; and we cannot help suggesting that a considerable delay may be attended with fatal consequences."

A little later, they went again to the Secretary of State with the same logic, encouraged, no doubt, by the growing sentiment throughout France in favor of war upon England, which now began to make itself felt on all sides, and by the evident willingness with which their reasoning had been listened to in the councils of the King. They presented the necessities of the United States in view of the great armaments which it was understood England was making ready with the aid of German mercenary troops, the inconvenience arising from delay in shipping arms and munitions of war which had been promised from France, the great danger to be apprehended from the defection of the negroes, "who, being

excited and armed by the British, may greatly strengthen the invaders," and they attached the formal declarations

"That notwithstanding the measures taken to convince the Court of Britain that France does not countenance the Americans, that Court, according to our information, believes firmly the contrary; and it is submitted to the consideration of Your Excellency whether, if the English make a conquest of the American States, they will not take the first opportunity of showing their resentment, by beginning themselves the war that would otherwise be avoided; and perhaps beginning it as they did the last, without any previous declaration.

"That, upon the whole, we can not on this occasion omit expressing our apprehensions that, if Britain is now suffered to recover the Colonies and annex again their great growing strength and commerce to her own, she will become in a few years the most formidable power by sea and land that Europe has yet seen, and assuredly, from the natural pride and insolence of that people, a power to all the other States the most pernicious and intolerable."

They submitted, therefore, with all deference to the wisdom of His Majesty and his ministers, whether, if the independence of the United States of America, with the consequent diminution of British power and the freedom of commerce with them, were an object of importance to all Europe and to France in particular, this was not the proper time for effectual exertions in their favor, for beginning that war which could scarcely be much longer avoided, and which would be sanctified by this best of justifications, that a much injured and innocent people would thereby be protected and delivered from cruel oppression and secured in the enjoyment of their just rights; than which nothing could contribute more to the glory of His Majesty and of that nation.[1]

During this time, however, the French Foreign Office continued to veil its communications with the Americans with extreme caution, lest these should attract anew the

[1] 1st February, 1777: Diplomatic Correspondence, Wharton, ii. 257.

suspicions of the British ministry and embarrass the diplomatic relations, which, to say the least, were then none too cordial. The arrival of Dr. Franklin rendered this especially difficult, because the presence of the distinguished American in Paris became at once the subject of unusual interest, not only among scholars and students whom his literary reputation would naturally attract, but also among men of the world and military men of rank, who began to frequent his little house at Passy to see the celebrated "docteur" and to hear him talk about the Revolution in America. Indeed, the movements of the Continental army were discussed with maps and plans, and the battles fought again, as if France were a participant in the struggle and the Parisians were watching interests partly their own. "The conduct of our General, in avoiding a decisive action," wrote the Commissioners, "is much applauded by the military people here, particularly Marshals Maillebois, Broglio, and D'Arcy. M. Maillebois has taken the pains to write his sentiments of some particulars useful in carrying on our war, which we send enclosed. But that which makes the greatest impression in our favor here is the prodigious success of our armed ships and privateers. The damage we have done their West India trade has been estimated, in a representation to Lord Sandwich, by the merchants of London, at one million eight hundred thousand pounds Sterling, which has raised insurance to twenty-eight per cent., being higher than at any time in the last war with France and Spain."[1]

Nevertheless, the French Secretary of State was determined to avoid the acknowledgment of Dr. Franklin's presence openly as long as it could be avoided, and especially to create a favorable impression in England. He wrote to the Ambassador in London that he "was still

[1] B. Franklin, Silas Deane, and Arthur Lee to the Committee of Secret Correspondence, 6th February, 1777 : Diplomatic Correspondence, Wharton, ii. 261.

ignorant of the motive of the voyage of this member of Congress," and he instructed M. de Noailles, in case he should be called upon in England for an explanation, to take refuge behind the general ignorance in this regard which he shared with the ministry. Franklin had been in Paris ten days at that time, and, although M. de Vergennes could say that he did not know officially what the purpose of his coming was, for he had not seen him then, yet that statement was dangerously close to the limit of exact truth; for Franklin, Deane, and Lee had presented their credentials and had asked for an audience, which M. de Vergennes accorded them, as we have seen, on the 28th of December, the same day he wrote to the Ambassador in London.[1]

The American Commissioners were not deceived, however, by this official denial of their presence, as to the purposes of France. Dr. Franklin's coming had, in fact, given new vigor to the relations already established at the Court by Mr. Silas Deane; and not only was the assurance of aid to the Colonies reaffirmed, but every facility was presented to the Agents of Congress that a neutral Power could offer the belligerents without occasioning an immediate outbreak of hostilities. "In our first conversation with the Minister, after the arrival of Mr. Franklin," they wrote,[2] "it was evident that this Court, while it treated us privately with all civility, was cautious of giving umbrage to England, and was therefore desirous of avoiding an open reception and acknowledgment of us, or entering into any formal negotiation with us as Ministers from Congress. To make us easy, however, we were told that the ports of France were open to our ships as friends; that our people might freely

[1] Angleterre, t. 519, No. 116: Doniol, La Participation de la France, ii. 306.

[2] B. Franklin and Silas Deane to the Committee of Secret Correspondence, 12th March, 1777: Diplomatic Correspondence, Wharton, ii. 283.

purchase and export, as merchandise, whatever our States had occasion for, vending at the same time our own commodities; that in doing this we should experience all the facilities that a Government disposed to favor us could, consistent with treaties, afford to the enemies of a friend. But though it was at that time no secret that two hundred field-pieces of brass and thirty thousand fusils, with other munitions of war in great abundance, had been taken out of the King's magazines for the purpose of exportation to America, the Minister, in our presence, affected to know nothing of that operation, and claimed no merit to his Court on that account. But he intimated to us that it would be well taken if we communicated with no other person about the Court concerning our affairs but himself, who would be ready at all convenient times to confer with us."

The Commissioners added that, during the several conferences held by them with the representatives of the French Government, every step was taken to gratify England publicly, by attending to the remonstrances of her Ambassador, forbidding the departure of ships which had military stores on board, recalling officers who had leave of absence and were going to join the Continental army, and giving strict orders that American prizes should not be sold in French ports; "yet, that we might not be discouraged, it was intimated to us by persons about the Court that those measures were necessary at present, France not being yet quite ready for a war, and that we might be assured of her good will to us and our cause."

Therefore the Commissioners were wise enough to acquiesce, under circumstances which were already exceedingly advantageous to the cause they represented, although in some respects, as in the matter of the negotiation of a treaty which they hoped to accomplish, the French Government had not fulfilled the wishes and expectations of Dr. Franklin. Whilst they exerted all the influence that

they could bring to bear in this direction, they carefully avoided any attempt to coerce the ministry. Indeed, at the end of May, five months after Franklin's arrival, he and Silas Deane wrote to Congress that, although the treaty of commerce was not as yet being proceeded with, because the plan of the Cabinet appeared to be not to enter into any transaction with the Colonies that might imply an acknowledgment of American independence whilst peace continued between France and England, yet "they tell us we enjoy all the advantages already which we propose to obtain by such a Treaty, and that we may depend on continuing to receive every indulgence in our trade that is allowed to the most favored nations. Feeling ourselves assisted in other respects, cordially and essentially, we are the more readily induced to let them take their own time, and to avoid making ourselves troublesome by an unreasonable importunity. The interest of France and Spain, however, in securing our friendship and commerce, seems daily more and more generally understood here, and we have no doubt of finally obtaining the establishment of that commerce with all the formalities necessary." [1]

Indeed, there was very little ground for reasonable complaint, and very little doubt that the assertion of the French Cabinet was true that the United States were receiving, in fact, the very benefits which they sought in an alliance, so far as those benefits did not imply a participation in open hostilities; for, in the month of March, ten ships, loaded with munitions of war, under the sanction of the Government, by Beaumarchais (Roderique Hortalès et Cie.), were crossing the sea to America, the names of some of them having been changed by that clever intermediary in order the better to escape the notice of British spies and to get out of port undisturbed; and Beaumarchais

[1] 25th May, 1777: Diplomatic Correspondence, Wharton, ii. 324.

said in the report of his movements to M. de Vergennes, "Never was a commercial transaction pressed with more vigor, in spite of every sort of obstacle that I have encountered."[1]

But at the Court of Spain the earnest solicitations of the French Ambassador still brought forth no definite statement of the part that the Spanish Government was willing to take in conjunction with France when a suitable opportunity should occur to intervene between England and her Colonies. In response to the efforts of M. de Vergennes to force from the Conde de Floridablanca some intimation, at least, of his general policy under the Family Compact, the Spanish Premier merely declared that "there was too little secrecy at the Court of Versailles" to justify him in expressing his opinions freely, and that later, upon some proper occasion, he should communicate with M. de Vergennes.[2]

It was impossible, therefore, for the French Cabinet to count upon the co-operation of Spain, though that was now the only cause of further delay in its decision to take part openly in the war. The Government of King Louis was ready for the event; it had made diligent exertions for many months to equip and strengthen the navy, which was looked upon as the most important element of success in the case of a war that must necessarily depend upon the superiority at sea. It is very probable that when M. de Vergennes hesitated, the year before, to undertake hostilities against Great Britain, his hesitation was largely due to the unfinished condition of the French marine forces at that moment; but there was no longer evidence of this weakness by the middle of the year 1777; for the navy had been reorganized, and was

[1] 7th March, 1777: Letter quoted by M. Doniol, La Participation de la France, ii. 315, note.

[2] M. d'Ossun to the Comte de Vergennes, 7th July, 1777; Espagne, t. 585, No. 17: Doniol, La Participation de la France, ii. 442.

in a state of efficiency which the Secretary of State declared would last throughout the reign of Louis XVI. and far beyond.[1]

The situation in France had been reduced, then, simply to the decision of the question whether the Government should wait longer, in the hope of inducing the King of Spain to unite in the undertaking, or whether France should go into the war alone. This is evident throughout the voluminous diplomatic correspondence which took place between the Foreign Office at Versailles and the French Ambassador at Madrid during the summer and autumn of 1777. Whilst the conventional language of mutual understanding was constantly employed by M. de Vergennes in all his official communications with the Cabinet of Spain, through which it was made to appear that King Louis XVI. looked with respectful eagerness for the advice and approval of his uncle of Spain in every measure relating to the attitude toward Great Britain, and was solicitous to take no step which had not received the sanction of his ripe experience and wise judgment, France was rapidly approaching the point at which she was to adopt the course of entering alone into the treaty with America and leaving the way open to Spain to follow when it should suit that Government to do so.

The boldness of certain American privateers, in sailing out of French ports to destroy or capture British merchantmen and in returning thither with their prizes, left the Cabinet of France no alternative before the protests of the British Ambassador, and forced it to prohibit this use of French protection, which could not be justified upon any principle under the existing treaty obligations of France. Captain Wickes of the frigate Reprisal, which had conveyed Dr. Franklin to France, committed

[1] M. de Vergennes to the Marquis de Noailles, 2d May, 1777 ; Angleterre, t. 523, No. 3 : Doniol, La Participation de la France, ii. 446.

an act of this sort almost immediately after having set his guest ashore, by cruising in the English Channel and seizing several British vessels, which he carried into L'Orient as prizes. Orders were sent to him by the Government to go out of the port within twenty-four hours; but, as he complained that his frigate had sprung a-leak, he was permitted to remain until the necessary repairs were made, and was then enjoined to put to sea. As he was not seriously impressed, however, with the disapproval of the French authorities, he associated himself, even then, with two other captains, Nicholson and Johnson, of the privateers Lexington and Dolphin, and, after another cruise in the Channel, all three came into France bringing the prizes they had made.

M. de Vergennes thereupon addressed a note to the American Commissioners in Paris reminding them that, while he had assured them, at their first interview, that they should enjoy in France every security and comfort which had been shown to foreigners, and that every facility should be granted to American commerce compatible with the exact observance of the King's treaties, there was an article which forbade the admission of privateers into the King's ports, and that the Commissioners had promised to conform to it. He called their attention to the fact that the Reprisal, the Lexington, and the Dolphin had come in for refuge, declaring at the same time that he believed the Commissioners to be gentlemen too well informed, and too penetrating, not to see how such conduct affected the dignity of the King, his master, whilst it offended the neutrality which His Majesty professed; that it was by the King's express order that the subject was brought to their notice, with the royal instructions which had been sent to the ports that privateers should be sequestered and detained until sufficient security had been given that they would return directly to their own country and not expose themselves by new acts

of hostility to the necessity of seeking an asylum in the ports of France.

But in this admonition which the public faith obliged the Cabinet to present to the representatives of Congress, and which the representatives perfectly understood in its bearings upon the political situation at that moment, as, in fact, a mere concession to the demands of England in order to ward off hostilities for a short time, the true relations of France with the United States are definitely expressed by the closing paragraph of the official document, in which the Comte de Vergennes said, "What I have the honor to inform you, sirs, of the King's disposition, by no means changes the assurances which I was authorized to make to you at the time of your arrival, and which I again renew, for the security of your residence, and of all such of your nation whom it may suit to reside among us, as well as with respect to the commerce allowed of, which will meet with every facility on our part that our laws and usages will permit."[1] This was near the close of the period of France's dissembling in her relations with Great Britain. The decision of the Cabinet in favor of war was arrived at but a few days later, with the King's full knowledge and assent, and after a mature discussion in the royal presence of the plain question, "whether that was the moment to be taken advantage of in order to place England in such a position that it would be impossible for her any longer to disturb the public order?" That question being disposed of affirmatively, it remained only to decide what course of action should be pursued in regard to the Americans.

The Comte de Vergennes presented the subject to Louis XVI. in a document which still remains in the Archives of France, entitled "A memoir communicated to the King,

[1] Comte de Vergennes to the Commissioners, 16th July, 1777: Diplomatic Correspondence, Wharton, ii. 364. And see the reply of B. Franklin and Silas Deane, 17th July, 1777: ibid., p. 365.

the 23d of July, 1777, and approved by His Majesty the same day."[1] The argument, which resembles in its general outline that of the "Considérations" of the preceding year, was intended to lead the Cabinet of Spain into the conviction that the two Crowns were alike threatened by the preponderance of Great Britain in the political affairs of Europe, and that it was imperative that the house of Bourbon should seize the opportunity then offered to establish its ascendency by means of the American War. But, while it repeated to some extent the reasoning that had become familiar through frequent presentation at Madrid as well as at Versailles, this paper has a tone of determination, evidently based upon the progress of events, which had been lacking in the documents of 1776, and which indicates that the purpose of France was then definitively fixed.

The first question to be considered, said M. de Vergennes, was "whether it was a matter of indifference to the two Crowns that the American Colonies should submit to the yoke of the mother-country, or that they should succeed in their present effort and be free," the reply to which, he declared, was to be found in another question, namely, "Is it good and sound politics to contribute toward the strengthening of an enemy when one has at hand an opportunity to weaken him?" Evidently no one could hesitate in answer to such a proposition when it promised revenge, glory, and the humiliation of Great Britain. Besides this, he insisted, when the prodigious efforts then being made separately in England and in America were considered, the picture became frightful to contemplate if one imagined those forces reunited and directed against a new object.

Here is the identical train of thought that we have seen running through French diplomacy ever since the

[1] Espagne, t. 585, No. 56. The text is printed by M. Doniol, La Participation de la France, ii. 460–469.

outbreak of the troubles in the Colonies,—the opportunity to strike at England, and the danger of war with her if the opportunity were neglected. The day had arrived, however, for the Secretary of State to disclose his intention. It was too late, he declared, to flatter one's self that "the weak and indirect assistance hitherto sent out parsimoniously and timidly to the Colonies would enable them to make a successful resistance;" on the contrary, something more must now be done to help them to win, and to deserve their gratitude when peace should be restored. Their subjugation would be a dangerous weapon in the hand of Great Britain, which France and Spain would regret for centuries having allowed her to snatch away. It might, indeed, he admitted, offend the magnanimity and the religious sentiments of the two monarchs, thus to take advantage of the unhappy situation of England to strike her a blow which, if not mortal, would at least destroy her power and her influence. But a greater interest than these was at stake, and, said he, "It is an accepted doctrine, both in politics and in war, that it is better to forestall than to be forestalled." The two monarchies could soon be ready; for the French fishermen would be coming home from Newfoundland directly, and the Spanish treasure-fleet would be safely in port from Mexico; nothing would remain to be done then but to put into execution whatever plan it should be considered wise to adopt.

It was important, however, said M. de Vergennes, not merely to talk well, but to act well. The moment had come either to help the United States effectively and with courage, or else to abandon them altogether; and the months of January and February of 1778 were the limit of the time after which, if nothing were done, the two Crowns must forever regret the loss of a neglected opportunity.

A copy of this document, formally approved under the

hand of the King, was despatched to the French Ambassador at Madrid, to be submitted by him to the Conde de Floridablanca. It marks the period at which France, having decided upon the war, exerted her influence to induce the Court of Spain to unite with her. The effort was sustained throughout the rest of the year 1777, with unremitting diligence, and the persuasive powers of the Comte de Vergennes found ample occupation in replying to the objections and discussing the dilatory expedients suggested by the unwilling mind of the Spanish Premier. But the date of an open declaration of hostilities had been fixed; and, as the event proved, the United States were assured of the participation of France after King Louis XVI. had written his assent upon the Mémoire of the 23d of July, 1777.

That Dr. Franklin and his colleagues in Paris were thoroughly informed as to the course of events, and were able to estimate the influences then at work, as well as to perceive the bearing of their results upon the relations of France, Spain, and Great Britain, is evident from their reports to Congress, which bear traces of growing confidence in the ultimate success of their mission on behalf of the United States. Not only did Dr. Franklin's distinguished social position at the French capital enable him to ascertain with precision the drift of national sentiment upon the question of the war with England, but there is no doubt that the opinions of the King and the Cabinet reached him more or less directly through his intercourse with people who occupied high official station at the Court. He could not fail to observe that he was treated with an exceptional courtesy which implied the friendship of France toward America; and he knew, although the minister never spoke of the matter in his presence, that the large shipments of supplies and munitions of war then being made to the United States through Hortalès et Cie. were in reality contributions

from the King's Government toward the establishment of American independence.

The summer having passed without an open recognition from France, he and his companions wrote to Congress, on the 8th of September,[1]—

"This Court continues the same conduct that it has held ever since our arrival. It professes to England a resolution to observe all Treaties, and proves it by restoring prizes too openly brought into their ports, imprisoning such persons as are found to be concerned in fitting out armed vessels against England from France, warning frequently those from America to depart, and repeating orders against the exportation of warlike stores. To us it privately professes a real friendship, wishes success to our cause, winks at the supplies we obtain here as much as it can without giving open grounds of complaint to England, privately affords us very essential aids, and goes on preparing for war. How long these two parts will continue to be acted at the same time, and which will finally predominate, may be a question. As it is the true interest of France to prevent our being annexed to Britain, that so the British power may be diminished, and the French commerce augmented, we are inclined to believe the sincerity is towards us, more especially as the united bent of the nation is manifestly in our favor ; their not having yet commenced a war is accounted for by various reasons. The Treaties subsisting among the Powers of Europe, by which they are obliged to aid those attacked more than those attacking, which it is supposed will make some difference, they not being fully prepared, the absence of their seamen in their fishery and West Indies, and the treasure expected from New Spain, with the sugars from the Islands, have all, it is said, contributed to restrain the national desire of a breach with England, in which her troublesome power may be reduced, the wealth and strength of France increased, and some satisfaction obtained for the injuries received in the unfair commencement of the last war."

Thus the situation remained outwardly uncertain until the end of the year 1777, the Cabinet of France, in the mean time, still secretly encouraging and assisting the United States, still trying to persuade the Court of

[1] B. Franklin, Silas Deane, and Arthur Lee to the Committee of Foreign Affairs : Diplomatic Correspondence, Wharton, ii. 388.

Spain, still maintaining, by an exceedingly artificial interchange of assurances of friendship, at least the outward signs of peace with Great Britain.

But in the month of December the course of events took an unexpected turn in the direction toward which the policy of the Comte de Vergennes had constantly tended, and brought that opportunity which he was awaiting, when reverses to the British arms in America should produce the moment of weakness in the affairs of England which he could justify at once as the motive and the occasion for France to strike her enemy a blow. It came now, when a despatch from the United States Congress brought to the legation at Passy the astonishing news that the formidable army of General Burgoyne, from which so much had been expected in England, was defeated, captured, and held by the Americans as prisoners of war. This intelligence, which was immediately communicated to the King, aroused the liveliest interest among all classes of people in France. It had an inconceivable effect upon the minds of men, said Beaumarchais;[1] it was hailed with expressions of delight throughout the city which seemed like the rejoicing that might follow a French victory won by French arms.

In this respect, at least, the battle of Saratoga is entitled to be considered as one of the decisive battles of the world, that it marks an epoch in the course of the American Revolution; for it led to the participation of France in the War of Independence, and it was one of the critical turning-points in the history of freedom in America. "Now is the time to act," said the Comte de Vergennes; "*aut nunc aut nunquam:* the lost time was perhaps not our fault, but there is no more now to lose."[2]

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[1] To the Comte de Vergennes, 7th December, 1777; Angleterre, t. 525, No. 17: Doniol, La Participation de la France, ii. 642.

[2] To the Comte de Montmorin, 13th December, 1777; Espagne, t. 587, No. 103: Doniol, La Participation de la France, i. 643.

No time was lost, indeed, by the Council of the King; for a note was sent at once to the legation of the United States which formally opened negotiations with the Commissioners of Congress for a treaty of commerce and alliance, and which was the initial step toward the declaration of hostilities against Great Britain. This note, written upon the gilt-edged paper which Louis XVI. used for his private correspondence, and assented to by his "approuvé" on the 6th of December, 1777,[1] announced to the American Commissioners that His Majesty desired them to be informed that the situation of public affairs had made it impossible theretofore for him to accede to their requests, and to testify to the united Provinces of North America by open marks of friendship the interest which His Majesty had always entertained in their cause; but that, as circumstances appeared then more favorable to the establishment of intimate relations with them, he should no longer decline to listen to any propositions that the Commissioners might have to make to him, to consider them, and to give to the United States every proof that circumstances would permit of his interest and his affection.

His Majesty reminded the Commissioners, however, that the more he was inclined to give them these proofs of his sentiments the more he should expect from the wisdom and the prudence of the Commissioners themselves, in respecting the motives of secrecy which would not yet allow the King to recognize, and openly declare, the independence of the United States; that His Majesty was bound by the closest ties to the King of Spain, by reason of which he was unwilling to make any engagement to which that Prince was not a party and which was not to be executed in concert with him; and that therefore, while His Majesty declared that he was disposed to entertain

[1] Angleterre, t. 526, No. 60: Doniol, La Participation de la France, ii. 625.

such propositions as the Commissioners might have to make to him, it was with the express reservation that nothing should be concluded without the assent of the King his uncle.

There can be no reasonable doubt that this document was prepared with the full knowledge and co-operation of Dr. Franklin and his colleagues, and that their reply was composed with the approval of the Secretary of State; for the terms of the latter so exactly express the arguments of M. de Vergennes, in language so closely resembling that used by him in other documents which relate to the subject at that period, that the evidences of concerted action are distinctly traceable in it. It served the valuable purpose of opening negotiations with the United States upon the basis of an urgent demand made by the Americans themselves that their long-neglected appeal should be heard; and it became thus the vehicle by which to convey to the Court of Spain a new presentation of the American question in its bearing upon the interests of the two Crowns, coupled with the most persuasive solicitations from the Comte de Vergennes that the monarchies should now unite in a definite policy toward England; whilst at the same time the assurance contained in it that the King of France would take no step without the approval and advice of his uncle was intended to exert additional influence at Madrid, as an evidence of the good faith of France.

The carefully prepared answer of the Commissioners, which supplements the note addressed to them by the Secretary of State, is dated two days later, on the 8th of December, 1777.[1] In it they begged leave to represent to His Excellency the Comte de Vergennes that it was then nearly a year since they had had the honor of putting into his hands the propositions of Congress for a treaty

[1] B. Franklin, Silas Deane, and Arthur Lee to the Comte de Vergennes: Diplomatic Correspondence, Wharton, ii. p. 444.

of amity and commerce, requesting also the aid of ships of war, and offering to join the forces of the United States with those of France and Spain in acting against the dominions of Great Britain, and to make no peace but in conjunction with those Courts if Great Britain should declare war against them, to all which they had received no determinate answer; but that they were apprehensive lest a continuance of this state of uncertainty with regard to those propositions, together with the reports that must soon be spread in America of rigorous treatment met with in Spanish and French ports, should give advantage to the enemy in making ill impressions upon the minds of the American people, who, from the secrecy enjoined upon the Commissioners, could not be informed of the friendly and essential aids that had been generously but privately afforded them. The Commissioners conceived, therefore, that, present circumstances considered, the completing of such a treaty at that time must have the most happy effect in raising the credit of the United States abroad and strengthening their resolution at home, as well as in discouraging and diminishing their internal enemies and in confirming their friends who might otherwise waver.

"And the Commissioners," they added, "are further of opinion that the aid of ships desired might at this juncture be employed with great advantage to America, which when honored with a conference they can more particularly explain. They therefore request Your Excellency most earnestly to resume the consideration of those affairs, and appoint them some speedy day of audience thereupon."

A courier was despatched immediately by M. de Vergennes to the French Embassy at Madrid with a copy of this letter from the Commissioners, enclosed in a personal communication to the Ambassador, in which he directed him to present the subject at once to the King's attention,

assuring him that the French Cabinet regarded the situation as critical, and earnestly soliciting a prompt reply from the Government of Spain.[1] The appeal was a strong one. It would unquestionably have carried conviction with it in Spain if the Spanish ministry had been open to conviction, and if the Conde de Floridablanca had been willing to accept upon any conditions the policy which had been acceded to by his predecessor in the councils of the King. Spain was not ready for war, however, and this last appeal to her sympathies—for it was the last that the French Secretary of State made before the signing of the treaty—met with the same reception that had been accorded to the former representations of M. de Vergennes, except that, possibly, it drew forth a more distinct declaration from the Spanish Premier, who now said, with considerable warmth, that if France treated with the Americans her act would lead to war, and that there was neither an object to be gained by making war at that time nor a fixed plan for carrying it out. He would not accept the humiliation of England as a sufficient basis upon which the two monarchies could begin hostilities.

In the mean time, events were progressing with rapidity at Versailles; with such rapidity, indeed, that before the courier could return from Madrid with the Spanish reply, favorable or unfavorable as the event might prove, France had committed herself to the United States. The audience which the Commissioners had asked for in their note to M. de Vergennes was granted them on the 12th of December, four days later, and only one day after the courier had set out for Madrid. Dr. Franklin and his colleagues reported it to Congress on the 18th, in replying to the despatches which had announced the surrender of Burgoyne, which, they said, had "apparently occasioned as

[1] Comte de Vergennes to M. de Montmorin, 11th December, 1777; Espagne, t. 587, No. 99: cited by Doniol, La Participation de la France, ii. 632.

much general joy in France as if it had been a victory of their own troops over their own enemies."[1]

"We took the opportunity," said they, "of pressing the Ministry by a short memorial to the conclusion of our proposed treaty, which had so long lain under their consideration and been from time to time postponed. A meeting was had accordingly on Friday, the 12th instant, in which some difficulties were mentioned and removed; some explanations asked and given to satisfaction. As the concurrence of Spain is necessary, we were told that a courier should be despatched the next day to obtain it, which we are since assured was done; and in three weeks from the time the answer is expected.[2]

"On signifying to the Ministry the importance it might be of at this juncture—when probably Britain would make some propositions of accommodation—that the Congress should be informed explicitly what might be expected from France and Spain, M. Gerard, one of the Secretaries, came yesterday to inform us, by order of the King, that, after long and full consideration of our affairs and propositions in Council, it was decided, and His Majesty was determined, to acknowledge our independence, and make a Treaty with us of amity and commerce; that in this Treaty no advantage would be taken of our present situation to obtain terms from us which otherwise would not be convenient for us to agree to; His Majesty desiring that the Treaty, once made, should be durable, and our amity subsist forever, which could not be expected if each nation did not find its interest in the continuance, as well as in the commencement of it. It was therefore his intention that the terms of the Treaty should be such as we might be willing to agree to if our State had been long since established and in the fulness of strength and power, and such as we shall approve of when that time shall come; that His Majesty was fixed in his determination not only to acknowledge, but to support, our independence by every means in his power; that in doing this he might probably soon be engaged in war, with all the expenses, risk, and damage usually attending it, yet he should not expect any compensation from us on that account, nor pretend that he acted wholly for our sakes; since, besides his real good

[1] Diplomatic Correspondence, Wharton, ii. 452.

[2] A second courier was sent to Madrid, on the 13th of December, to inform M. de Montmorin of this interview. Espagne, t. 587, No. 101: Doniol, La Participation de la France, ii. 637.

will to us and our cause, it was manifestly the interest of France that the power of England should be diminished by our separation from it. . . . That, as soon as the courier returned from Spain with the concurrence expected, the affair would be proceeded in and concluded; and of this we might give the Congress the strongest assurances in our despatches, only cautioning them to keep the whole for the present a dead secret, as Spain had three reasons for not immediately declaring: her money fleet not yet come home, her Brazil army and fleet the same, and her peace with Portugal not yet quite completed; but these obstacles would probably soon be removed."

It is evident that the Commissioners and the Cabinet were in complete accord at that time; and this document, which constitutes a valuable page of the history of the United States, shows how thoroughly they were acquainted with the negotiations that were then being carried forward with Spain, as well as with the discussions upon the situation that were constantly taking place in the King's Council. The echoes of these are distinctly heard between Versailles and Madrid, and prove how deliberately the Government of France entered into the treaty with the United States, after mature consideration, in which the King was finally brought to decide that he would make us his allies, and that through us he would be enabled to wreak his revenge upon the ancient enemy of his house.

There was no deception as to the motives of France. Franklin and those with him knew perfectly well what were the causes of the hostility that existed between her and the kingdom of Great Britain, and they understood how these causes might be made to serve the interests of the United States of America. That France came into our Revolution for reasons of policy which were satisfactory to her King and to his Cabinet, and which were strong enough to make them assume the burden and danger of another war, was manifest to the Commissioners, and they so declared it to Congress and to the nation. But what

these American patriots expressed their gratitude for, and what it is for us in our day, as well as for Americans yet to come, to remember always to the honor of France, is, that she did enter into our struggle, that she did give us her aid when we needed it, and that, no matter what her own private interests may have been, it was her participation in the War of Independence that made American liberty possible in the eighteenth century.

The couriers having returned from Spain without the assent of that Government, the King of France decided to wait no longer; and on the 8th of February Benjamin Franklin and Silas Deane wrote to the President of Congress,[1] "We have now the great satisfaction of acquainting you and the Congress that the Treaties with France are at length completed and signed."

The treaties of commerce and alliance were signed on the 6th of February, 1778.

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[1] Diplomatic Correspondence, Wharton, ii. 490.

CHAPTER X.

LA FAYETTE AT VALLEY FORGE AND BARREN HILL.

No event had taken place since the outbreak of the war which gave so great a degree of encouragement to the American people as the signing of the treaties of commerce and alliance between France and the United States. No single incident in the course of the struggle with Great Britain so clearly foreshadowed the ultimate establishment of independence as did this acknowledgment of the political existence of the American Government by one of the foremost Powers of the world; and it is hardly possible to overestimate the value of the immediate influence which it exerted at home and abroad, or of the part which it contributed to the final result. It stimulated the whole country to renewed efforts to bear a burden which was fast becoming too heavy for its waning strength; and in the new hope which this helping hand held forth to a courageous people, it closed the door forever against the offers of conciliation which the British ministry were making at that very moment, willing then to grant all the claims of right which had been asserted by the Colonists at the outset. Thenceforward the nature of the contest was changed in the eyes of the European Powers who had been watching its progress; and the conflict which, but the year before, had been the cause, among the petty German princes, of hiring or selling their subjects to Great Britain for the suppression, as it was said, of a mutiny in America, now became a war between the British monarchy on the one hand and the American people and the King of France on the other.

The alliance with France assured the independence of the United States; this was one of the conditions upon which the treaty was based; and, although it was evident that England would not yield readily, and that the war must still go on, possibly with increased bitterness, yet its character would henceforth be essentially different. The existence of the nation had been substantially established.

The news of the treaties, brought by Mr. Simeon Deane from France, was received with the greatest exultation in America. The despatches were delivered by him on Saturday, the 2d of May, 1778, after Congress had adjourned; but the House was immediately convened, in order that the joyful tidings might be published at once, and on the following Monday the treaties were ratified by Congress; after which, in the overflow of happiness at the event, they were published, in forgetfulness of the proper diplomatic consideration which would have required the consent of both contracting parties to such a proceeding.

The celebrations which followed produced a holiday even amid the desolation of Valley Forge. General Washington gave a dinner at the head-quarters in honor of the event, and great rejoicings took place throughout the army, with toasts and songs and *feux de joie*. A letter of Mr. Robert Morris to General Washington, on the 9th of May, reflects the universal sentiment: "When I congratulate your Excellency on the great good news lately received from France, you will not expect me to express my feelings. Were I in your company, my countenance might show, but my pen cannot describe them. Most sincerely do I give you joy. Our independence is undoubtedly secured; our country must be free."[1]

To the Marquis de La Fayette this news brought un-

[1] Sparks, Writings of Washington, v. 357, note.

bounded pleasure. It was the fulfilment of his most ardent hopes; it filled him with pride at the thought that his countrymen were engaged in the cause of American Independence, to which he himself was devoted. It justified, to some extent, at least, his own action in leaving France, and gave him reason to believe that his conduct was now approved at home, perhaps even that it had had some influence in guiding public sentiment toward America. Above all, however, was the joy in his heart which came from the feeling that now the cause of the United States was the cause of France; for before everything else in the world La Fayette was a Frenchman. He would never have left his country if there had been an opportunity for him to go into active service at home in the practice of his profession; and there is no doubt that he would rather have gone to war as a subordinate in the armies of France than to have accepted even the highest rank in any other country. But now that it seemed likely that he could serve France in America, in company also with his own countrymen and comrades in arms, in a war of revenge against the enemy whom all Frenchmen hated most of all their enemies, he felt that this was an event of crowning good fortune, than which nothing could give him greater happiness or satisfaction. Immediately upon the arrival of the news in the camp, on the 2d of May, he collected all the other French officers about him and joined with them in the celebration of the event.[1] A few days later, he had the distinguished honor of commanding a part of the army on the occasion of the grand review which General Washington held at Valley Forge in honor of the treaties. This review was made still more impressive by the character given it as an act of national thanksgiving and of reverent acknowledgment of the divine goodness toward the people of the

[1] Mémoires de ma Main, i. 46.

United States in the assurance of their liberties vouchsafed to them through the alliance with France.

The Commander-in-Chief issued a general order at Valley Forge, on the 6th of May, as follows:[1]

"It having pleased the Almighty Ruler of the Universe to defend the cause of the United American States, and finally to raise us up a powerful friend among the princes of the earth, to establish our liberty and independency upon a lasting foundation; it becomes us to set apart a day for gratefully acknowledging the divine goodness, and celebrating the important event, which we owe to his divine interposition. The several brigades are to be assembled for this purpose at nine o'clock to-morrow morning, when their chaplains will communicate the intelligence contained in the Postscript of the Pennsylvania Gazette of the 2nd instant, and offer up thanksgiving, and deliver a discourse suitable to the occasion. At half after ten o'clock a cannon will be fired, which is to be a signal for the men to be under arms; the brigade inspectors will then inspect their dress and arms and form the battalions according to the instructions given them, and announce to the commanding officers of the brigade that the battalions are formed.

"The commanders of brigades will then appoint the field-officers to the battalions, after which each battalion will be ordered to load and ground their arms. At half past eleven a second cannon will be fired as a signal for the march, upon which the several brigades will begin their march by wheeling to the right by platoons, and proceed by the nearest way to the left of their ground by the new position; this will be pointed out by the brigade inspectors. A third signal will then be given, on which there will be a discharge of thirteen cannon; after which a running fire of the infantry will begin on the right of Woodford's, and continue throughout the front line; it will then be taken up on the left of the second line and continue to the right. Upon a signal given, the whole army will huzza, *Long live the King of France;* the artillery then begins again and fires thirteen rounds; this will be succeeded by a second general discharge of the musketry in a running fire, and huzza, *Long live the friendly European Powers.* The last discharge of thirteen pieces of artillery will be given, followed by a general running fire, and huzza, *The American States.*"

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[1] Sparks, Writings of Washington, v. 355: from the Orderly Book.

This manœuvre was successfully carried out; and the army is said to have presented a brilliant appearance. Major-General Lord Stirling commanded on the right, the Marquis de La Fayette on the left, and the Baron de Kalb on the second line; and upon the following day General Washington announced in a general order,—

"The Commander-in-Chief takes great pleasure in acquainting the army that its conduct yesterday afforded him the highest satisfaction. The exactness and order with which all its movements were formed, is a pleasing evidence of the progress it has made in military improvement, and of the perfection to which it may arrive by a continuance of that laudable zeal which now so happily prevails. The General, at the same time, presents his thanks to Baron Steuben, and the gentlemen acting under him, for their exertions in the duties of their office, the good effects of which are already apparent, and for the care, activity, and propriety with which they conducted the business of yesterday."

This period marks an interesting change in the discipline of the American troops which was due to the perseverance and instruction of the Baron Steuben, whose labors transformed the untaught masses of militia and Continental soldiers at Valley Forge from what was, in fact, little more than an aggregation of men totally ignorant of discipline in the military sense, without order, without uniformity of movement, without system in its organization or government, without any kind of instruction except such as related to forming or changing front in the face of the enemy, into a trained and organized force. It is one of the strangest features of the American Revolution that, in spite of all their defects, these men had frequently gone into battle and had fought with the superior forces of British and Germans to whom they were opposed, with results that cannot be regarded as other than extraordinary by any one who carefully studies the progress of the war. It was incomprehensible to foreign observers, accustomed to the order and discipline and

scrupulously careful preparation for fighting in the armies of Europe. It appeared to foreign military men like a contradiction in terms. Señor Galves, the Spanish Governor of Louisiana, commented upon this with amusement and wonder in writing a despatch to his Government. "Up to this time," said he, "we have always supposed that troops should be disciplined and equipped before going into battle, but what has happened here disproves this theory; for the Americans, by their courage alone, *without training* and *without breeches*, have whipped the British who had both."[1]

When Baron Steuben arrived at the camp at Valley Forge, in February, 1778, he found it in a deplorable state. His own relation of it informs us,[2]—

"The effective strength of the army was divided into divisions, commanded by major-generals; into brigades, commanded by brigadier-generals; and into regiments, commanded by colonels. The number of men in a regiment was fixed by Congress as well as in a company—so many infantry, cavalry, and artillery. But the eternal ebb and flow of men engaged for three, six, and nine months, who went and came every day, rendered it impossible to have either a regiment or a company complete; and the words company, regiment, brigade, and division were so vague that they did not convey any idea upon which to form a calculation, either of a particular corps or of the army in general. They were so unequal in their number that it would have been impossible to execute any manœuvres. Sometimes a regiment was stronger than a brigade. I have seen a regiment consisting of *thirty men*, and a company of *one corporal*. . . . Not only the clothes but the arms were carried off by those who had completed their term of service. General Knox assured me that, previous to the establishment of my department, there never was a campaign in which the military magazines did not furnish from five thousand to eight thousand muskets to replace those which were lost in the way I have described above. The loss of bayonets was still greater. The American soldier, never having used this arm, had

[1] Comte de Montmorin to M. de Vergennes, 1st June, 1778; Espagne, t. 589, No. 98: Doniol, La Participation de la France, iii. 261.

[2] Kapp, Life of Steuben, p. 115.

no faith in it, and never used it but to roast his beefsteak, and indeed often left it at home. . . . No captain kept a book. Accounts were never furnished or required. . . . The arms at Valley Forge were in a horrible condition, covered with rust, half of them without bayonets, many from which a single shot could not be fired. The pouches were quite as bad as the arms. A great many of the men had tin boxes instead of pouches, others had cow-horns; and muskets, carbines, fowling-pieces, and rifles were seen in the same company.

"The description of the dress is easily given. The men were literally naked, some of them in the fullest extent of the word. The officers who had coats had them of every color and make. I saw officers, at a grand parade at Valley Forge, mounting guard in a sort of dressing-gown, made of an old blanket or woollen bed-cover. With regard to their military discipline, I may safely say no such thing existed. In the first place, there was no regular formation. A so-called regiment was formed of three platoons, another of five, eight, nine, and the Canadian regiment of twenty-one. The formation of the regiments was as varied as their mode of drill, which consisted only of the manual exercise. Each colonel had a system of his own, the one according to the English, the other according to the Prussian or the French style. . . . The greater part of the captains had no roll of their companies, and had no idea how many men they had under their orders. When I asked a colonel the strength of his regiment, the usual reply was, 'Something between two and three hundred men.'"

It is startling to read the account of the internal weakness and lack of preparation of this Continental army, to whose steady courage and endurance through this time of suffering and trial we owe so great a debt of gratitude; it is a story which none of us would accept but for the fact that it comes from an authority which we have no right to question. Baron Steuben brought to his task a long experience in military affairs and a knowledge acquired in the war school of Frederick the Great, through which he succeeded, by dint of untiring personal application and extraordinary earnestness of purpose in his undertaking, in establishing order, uniformity, and method, as well as strictness of discipline, among the troops. One

of the first results of his training was the excellent bearing of the men at the grand review at Valley Forge, to which General Washington referred with evident satisfaction in his general order of the 8th of May, quoted above.

In the midst of the rejoicings over the news from France, General Washington was not blind to the fact that there remained much to be done in America before the war could be ended by the acknowledgment in England of the independence of the United States.[1] His belief was that, although it might be taken for granted that the British force could not be greatly strengthened by new troops, which under present circumstances were not likely to be sent out from England, yet their remaining strength would be dangerous if it should be concentrated and properly directed in the ensuing campaign. From certain movements lately reported to him, notably the sailing from Philadelphia of two hundred transport-vessels, he judged that it might be General Howe's purpose to evacuate Rhode Island and move the troops from there to New York to operate along the Hudson River, or possibly to use them in reinforcing Philadelphia; in which latter event the army at Valley Forge would need to be strengthened immediately. With this object in view, he summoned a council of war at Valley Forge, on the 8th of May, at which were present Major-Generals Gates, Greene, Stirling, Mifflin, La Fayette, de Kalb, Armstrong, and Steuben, with Brigadier-Generals Knox and du Portail.[2] The Commander-in-Chief laid before the council the state of the enemy's forces, which he estimated at something more than sixteen thousand men; of these about ten thousand were in Philadelphia, four thousand in New York, and about two thousand in Rhode Island. Of the Continental

[1] Letters to Major-General Heath, 5th May, 1778, and to Major-General McDougall, same date: Sparks, Writings of Washington, v. 356, 359.

[2] Sparks, Writings of Washington, v. 360, note.

troops there were at Valley Forge about eleven thousand eight hundred men, including the sick; and the other detachments at Wilmington and upon the Hudson River, with reinforcements that might reasonably be counted upon, would swell the number of effective troops to twenty thousand. Thereupon the council was requested to decide what measures it would be best to pursue.

"After a full and unreserved discussion, it was the unanimous opinion of the council, that the line of conduct most consistent with sound policy, and best suited to promote the interests and safety of the United States, was to remain on the defensive and wait events, and not attempt any offensive operation against the enemy, till circumstances should afford a fairer opportunity of striking a successful blow. As the enemy were strongly fortified by nature, and by artificial works, in all their positions, it would require a greatly superior force to attack them, with any hope of a favorable issue. It was agreed that to take Philadelphia by storm was impracticable, and that thirty thousand men would be requisite for a blockade. The Continental force could not be so much increased by the militia, even if that description of troops could be relied on for such an enterprise. In short, strong objections were believed to exist against all offensive movements." Consequently, it was decided to remain quietly at Valley Forge for the present, at least, and await the development of the enemy's plans.

It became more evident each day, in the mean time, from all information that General Washington could obtain, that the British were contemplating some movement of importance; and, as the days wore on, he concluded, rightly, as it afterward proved, that their purpose was to evacuate Philadelphia,—a step which now became all the more probable because of the announcement of the treaties with France. For, if a French fleet were to enter the Delaware River and cut off the communication by sea,

and if a sufficient force were to be landed along the river bank to co-operate with the Continental army at Valley Forge, which could have been considerably reinforced in case of necessity,—as we have seen by the statements made at the council of war,—the situation of General Howe would become at once exceedingly dangerous and embarrassing. In this connection General Washington concluded to send out a detachment toward the enemy's lines at Philadelphia, for the purpose of watching their movements and of keeping the army informed in the event of their attempting to execute any contemplated design, as well as to harass and annoy them if an opportunity should offer itself whilst the British were retreating. He selected a force for this purpose from among his most reliable troops, and appointed the Marquis de La Fayette to take command of the expedition,—a mark of confidence which not only proves the esteem in which the Commander-in-Chief held La Fayette, but also shows that he valued his judgment as a commander, and his military skill, sufficiently to intrust to him the carrying out of a delicate manœuvre in the face of the enemy, and to send with him a body of men whom he could not afford, under any circumstances, to have weakened or destroyed. This gave La Fayette an opportunity to show his coolness and self-possession in the midst of danger, and his skill in extricating himself from difficulty, quite as well as any other performance of his during the war; and it won for him a special commendation from the General in a letter written afterward to Congress.

The instructions given to La Fayette by General Washington when he was appointed to this enterprise were as follows:[1]

"Sir,—The detachment under your command, with which you will immediately march towards the enemy's lines, is de-

[1] Sparks, Writings of Washington, v. 368.

signed to answer the following purposes; namely, to be a security to this camp and a cover to the country between the Delaware and the Schuylkill, to interrupt the communication with Philadelphia, to obstruct the incursions of the enemy's parties, and to obtain intelligence of their motions and designs. This last is a matter of very interesting moment, and ought to claim your particular attention. You will endeavour to procure trusty and intelligent spies, who will advise you faithfully of whatever may be passing in the city, and you will without delay communicate to me every piece of material information you obtain.

"A variety of concurring accounts make it probable, that the enemy are preparing to evacuate Philadelphia. This is a point, which it is of the utmost importance to ascertain; and, if possible, the place of their future destination. Should you be able to gain certain intelligence of the time of their intended embarkation, so that you may be able to take advantage of it, and fall upon the rear of the enemy in the act of withdrawing, it will be a very desirable event. But this will be a matter of no small difficulty, and will require the greatest caution and prudence in the execution. Any deception or precipitation may be attended with the most disastrous consequences.

"You will remember, that your detachment is a very valuable one, and that any accident happening to it would be a very severe blow to this army. You will therefore use every possible precaution for its security, and to guard against a surprise. No attempt should be made, nor any thing risked, without the greatest prospect of success, and with every reasonable advantage on your side. I shall not point out any precise position to you; but shall leave it to your discretion to take such posts occasionally as shall appear to you best adapted to the purposes of your detachment. In general, I would observe, that a stationary post is unadvisable, as it gives the enemy an opportunity of knowing your situation, and concerting plans successfully against you. In case of any offensive movement against this army, you will keep yourself in such a state as to have an easy communication with it, and at the same time harass the enemy's advance.

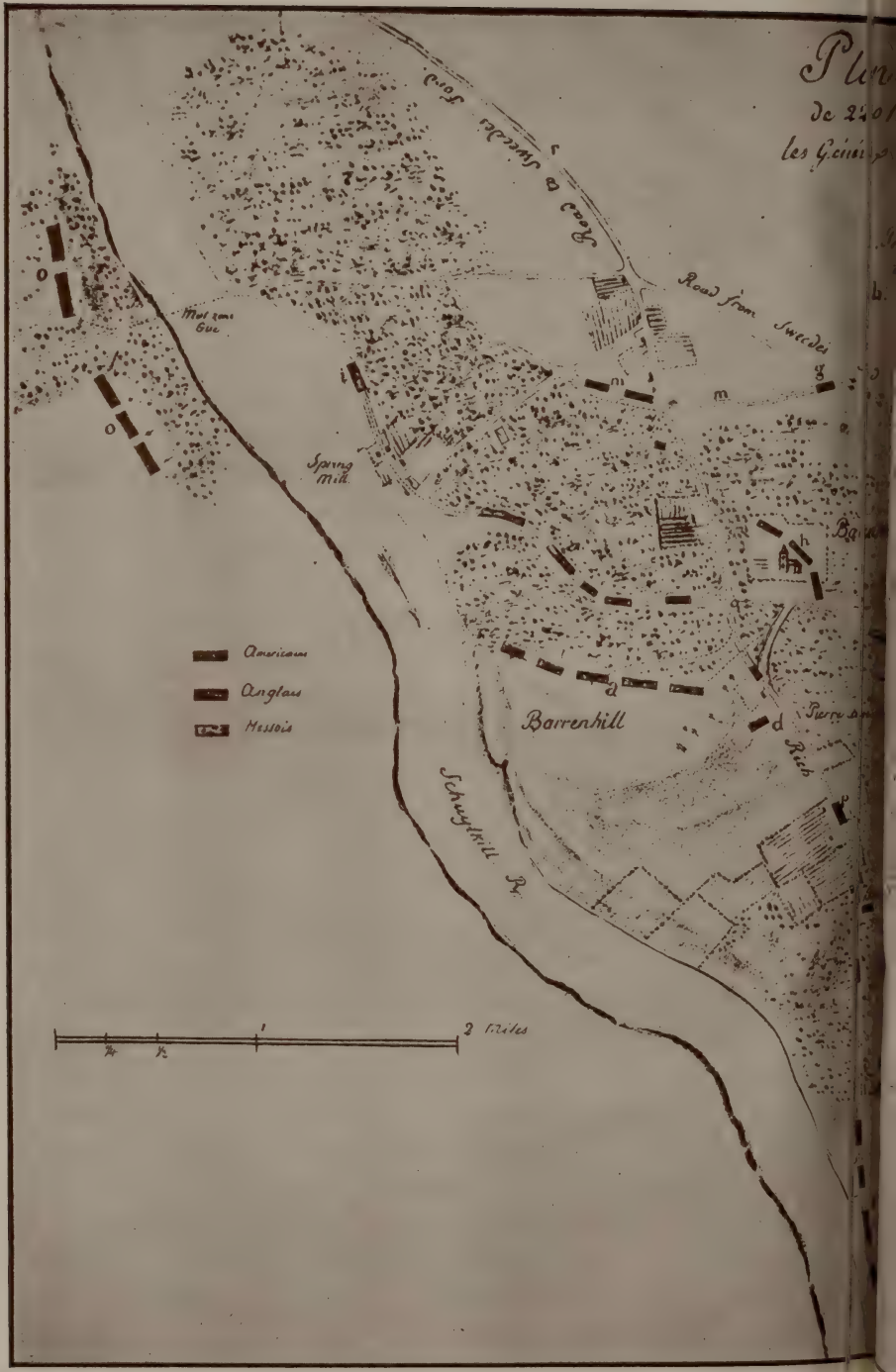
"Our parties of horse and foot between the rivers are to be under your command, and to form part of your detachment. As great complaints have been made of the disorderly conduct of the parties, which have been sent towards the enemy's lines, it is expected that you will be very attentive in preventing abuses of the

like nature, and will inquire how far complaints already made are founded in justice.

"Given under my hand, at Head Quarters, this 18th day of May, 1778."

La Fayette accordingly left camp on the 18th of May, with about twenty-two hundred men. One part of these was led by General Poor; another part consisted of about six hundred Pennsylvania militia, under General Potter; there was also the independent company of Captain Alan MacLean, as well as about fifty Iroquois Indians. He had, as his force of artillery, five pieces of cannon.

He crossed the Schuylkill River at Swede's Ford and advanced about twelve miles along the eastern bank, following what is known as the Ridge Road, to a point very near the eleventh mile-stone from the city of Philadelphia, where there was a little hamlet, called Barren Hill, with a church and a graveyard, upon the high ground of the ridge between the Valley of the Schuylkill and the country to the eastward which drains into the Delaware River. From it the Ridge Road runs almost due south to Philadelphia, while to the east there is a road which leads to White Marsh and to Chestnut Hill, and another going in a southeasterly direction to Germantown; on the west, by a very easy descent, a road ran through Spring Mill to Matson's Ford of the Schuylkill River, at the present town of Conshohocken, some three miles northwesterly from Barren Hill. This position, therefore, was extremely well suited to the purposes of La Fayette's expedition; because, whilst it afforded an opportunity of taking up an advantageous position in case of attack, it permitted reconnoissances to be made with ease in any direction, either toward the city, or through the country lying near the Delaware, or along the slope of the river bank on the Schuylkill side, and it admitted the prompt and effective execution of a military operation in case of necessity, as the young general found afterward, to his


Road to Swedes Ford
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Mot'ons Gut
Spring Mill
Barrenhill
Schuylkill R.
Americans
Anglais
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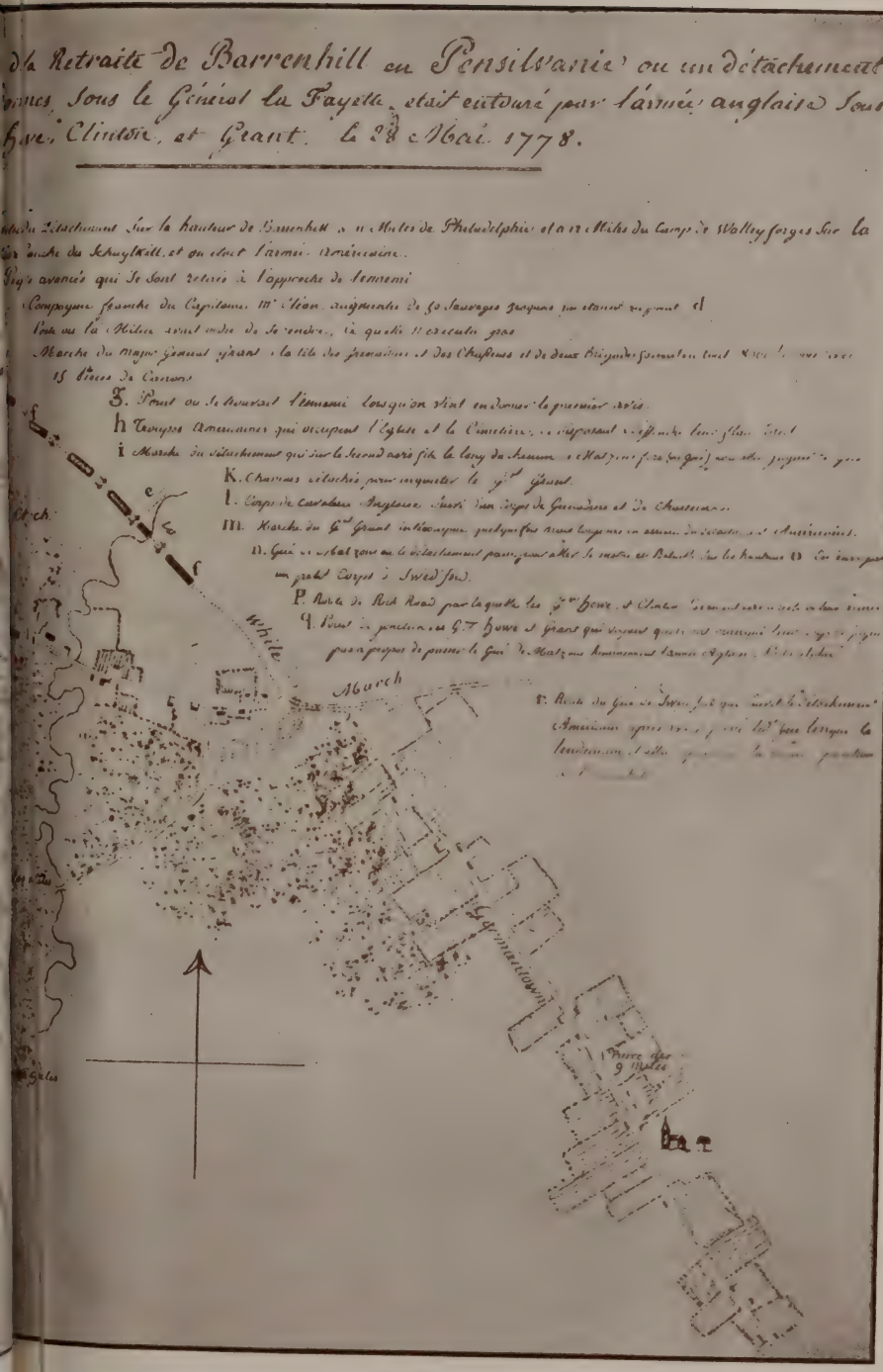
1
2 Miles

de la Retraite de Barrenhill en Pensilvanie ou un détachement Commandé Sous le Général la Fayette, était entouré par l'armée anglaise Sous les Ordres de Howe, Clinton, et Grant. le 28 Mai 1778.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Mill

great good fortune. La Fayette saw the advantages of this situation, and selected it with excellent judgment.

Drawing up his troops upon a small prominence to the west of the Ridge Road, just south of the hamlet of Barren Hill, in a position which commanded admirably the approaches along the highway from Philadelphia, he protected his right wing by the abrupt descent which made it inaccessible from the side toward the Schuylkill, whilst his left rested upon a stretch of forest in front of which were one or two substantial stone houses, which could be made to serve as fortifications in case of need. Well in advance of his line he placed his five pieces of cannon; and beyond these, again, in the direction of Philadelphia, were pickets who guarded the highway for two miles, Captain MacLean's company, which performed this service, having pushed forward as far as the ninth mile-stone from the city, accompanied by the Iroquois warriors, whose methods of warfare made them exceedingly useful in this case as scouts. As his command was now secured against sudden attack upon his front and to his right, it remained for General La Fayette to protect his left flank against surprise from the direction of White Marsh and Chestnut Hill, in which direction he detected the weakness of his attitude if the enemy should come out in force by the roads to the east of him and turn his position. In order to guard against this misadventure, he assigned the duty of guarding the flank to the militia under General Potter, who was ordered to take his post upon the road leading in a northwesterly and southeasterly direction from Swedes' Ford to White Marsh, which formed a junction with the roads running into Chestnut Hill and Germantown and was the natural outlet to a force advancing from Philadelphia by any route to the eastward of Barren Hill. For some reason that our documents do not explain, the militia failed to carry out this order; and upon that turned the whole result of the expedition.

In the mean time, word of La Fayette's movements was taken to Philadelphia by British spies, and awakened there an extraordinary interest among the officers of the garrison; for the reputation of the young general had extended within the lines of the enemy through reports coming by way of England which had given a detailed account of his setting out for America, exaggerated somewhat, no doubt, in many of its attendant circumstances, but substantially true in the main; and his career was naturally watched with unusual attention, both because his important influence and his rank in Europe would have singled him out, in any event, amid his present surroundings in the Continental army, and especially because, as a French nobleman who had voluntarily entered into the war, and who had never hesitated to express with the utmost freedom his political opinions or to declare his intentions in this connection, he aroused necessarily an indignant protest in the minds of all Englishmen. It would have gratified them to see him defeated; but it would have produced unbounded joy if he could have been outwitted and captured, if he could have been brought into Philadelphia at the termination of his first enterprise, to be loaded with indulgent courtesy and fêted with mock admiration, and later, perhaps, to be returned to France with his heroism reduced to the vainglory of a school-boy, and his prestige extinguished in ridicule. Something of this kind came very near happening at Barren Hill; and La Fayette was probably never in such grave danger at any other time in the course of his life. If he had been captured upon this expedition, he would inevitably have been ruined.

The British commanders in Philadelphia seized upon this opportunity with the greatest possible readiness, determined to take advantage of it to destroy the small detachment which was now isolated from the main body of the American army and to bring back La Fayette in triumph

as a prisoner of war. So great was the importance attached to the result of their undertaking that General Clinton, who at that moment was about to succeed to the command upon the withdrawal of General Howe, decided to lead it in person, in order to be perfectly sure of its success; and the enthusiasm among the officers attained such a point that General Howe himself, who was still in Philadelphia, preparing for his return to England, chose to accompany the expedition, that he might end his campaigns in America by taking part in a brilliant stroke from which they all expected great enjoyment and credit. It was not supposed for a moment that La Fayette could escape capture, because he was to be opposed by a force considerably more than four times as great as his own was known to be; and, under the plan by which it was intended to cut off his retreat by a rapid movement upon his flank and in his rear, he would have nothing left but to surrender at discretion or to fight under enormous disadvantages. The certainty of this prospect afforded such pleasure to General Howe and General Clinton that they invited a company of ladies and gentlemen to an entertainment in Philadelphia, upon the following day, to meet the Marquis de La Fayette;[1] and M. de La Fayette was afterward informed that Admiral Lord Howe had accompanied the expedition as a volunteer, that he might share with the other officers the enjoyment that all anticipated.

One division of the British army, which consisted of eight thousand men made up of regular troops and Hessians, with fifteen pieces of field artillery, under the command of General Grant, moved out of Philadelphia to the eastward through Frankford, on the Delaware River, and by a circuitous route advanced to Whitemarsh, where they took the road leading directly to Swedes' Ford. Having reached a point a short distance north of Ger-

[1] Mémoires, i. 75: Fragments extraits de divers Manuscrits,—D.

mantown, General Grant proceeded with his column along this road, in order to gain possession of the avenues of escape for La Fayette in case he should attempt to recross the Schuylkill River either at Swedes' Ford or at Matson's Ford, and, whilst thus effectually securing the advantage of him in the rear, to mass a sufficient number of British troops in that position to check any reinforcement that might be sent out to him from Valley Forge upon the first signal of alarm. In the mean time, another column, composed of grenadiers, accompanied by a small body of cavalry, under General Grey, had set out from Philadelphia by way of Germantown and was marching along the road which branches off from the highway to Swedes' Ford north of Germantown and runs directly to the Barren Hill Church, in order to occupy La Fayette's attention and to open the attack upon his left wing at that point;[1] whilst a third column was advancing northward along the Ridge Road, to engage him in front of his position; and this force was accompanied by General Clinton and General Howe in person.[2]

Thus far the enterprise of the British commander had been fully developed in accordance with the plan agreed upon. La Fayette was almost surrounded; if he retreated toward Swedes' Ford, he would fall into the hands of General Grant; if he moved toward the east, in the hope of gaining the Delaware River, he would meet General Grey, who was in direct communication with General Grant's force, and these two together would have an easy task to perform; if he tried to escape by the Ridge Road to some lower point on the Schuylkill, he would encounter General Clinton and General Howe in the very way in

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[1] Stedman says that General Grey "marched from Philadelphia along the western branch of the Schuylkill," and stationed himself "at a ford two or three miles in front of La Fayette's right flank."—History of the American War, i. 377.

[2] Marquis de Chastellux, Travels in North America, London, 1787, i. 295.

which those gentlemen hoped to meet him. All unconscious of the danger he was in, La Fayette was about to carry out the orders of the Commander-in-Chief as to discovering, if possible, the intentions of the enemy, and their probable evacuation of Philadelphia, by sending a messenger to the city who should gather such information as might be current there, for which purpose he had secured a young woman, who, under pretext of visiting her relations, was upon the point of setting out upon that errand. La Fayette was giving her his final instructions, upon the morning of the 20th of May, when word was brought to him that a party of dragoons wearing red coats had been seen in the Whitemarsh road. This information contained at the moment nothing startling to his mind, for he had posted General Potter to guard the road to Whitemarsh, and there happened to be some cavalry among the Pennsylvania militia whose coats were red. There was no reason to doubt that the troops reported from there formed a part of General Potter's command. La Fayette had made an appointment to meet that officer upon the Whitemarsh Road that day, and it appears to have been his intention to transfer his detachment thither that night. Nevertheless, he took immediate steps to ascertain the situation, with the result that a report came back to him, soon after, that a column was advancing upon him toward his left wing; this was the detachment of General Grey,[1] sent forward, as we have seen, by General Grant; and shortly afterward one of his aides, who had been sent out by him to reconnoitre, returned with the intelligence that General Grant's column was marching along the road leading to Swedes' Ford, and that the head of the column had already taken possession of the only line of escape to Valley Forge from Barren Hill by Swedes' Ford. At the same moment, the

[1] Mémoires, i. 76: Fragments extraits de divers Manuscrits,—D.

cry arose among the troops, in La Fayette's presence, that they were surrounded.

The situation was one to tax severely the young general's courage and presence of mind. He had no one to rely upon for assistance, and to act quickly was the only hope that remained for him. His first step, whilst he assumed as good a countenance as he could before his men, was to change his front, in order to meet General Grey on his left; this he did by throwing a part of his detachment beyond the church, and posting some of his force in the churchyard, where the stone wall afforded them excellent breast-works against the expected attack in that direction. In the mean time he discovered through his aides, whom he had sent out in haste in all directions, that, whilst they were unable to reach Valley Forge, there was one road along the Schuylkill River which was still open, although General Grant was then as near to it as he was, and if the British troops should advance but a little farther in that direction his only possible chance of escape would be gone. The Whitemarsh Road, which General Grant was following, formed a junction, not far to the north of Barren Hill, with the road leading to Matson's Ford, directly to the west of where La Fayette now was; and it was evidently General Grant's intention to cut off that ford of the Schuylkill also, that he might become absolutely master of the situation. The fact that he was rather slow in securing that position, and the good fortune which attended an extremely well devised effort to detain him, saved the Marquis de La Fayette from capture.[1]

La Fayette instantly conceived the idea of gaining Matson's Ford before General Grant could reach there. The conformation of the land at Barren Hill afforded him a very good opportunity to do this. It happens that the

[1] There is a local tradition that General Grant stopped at the Broad Axe Tavern to take his breakfast, and thus gave an opportunity for intelligence to be sent to La Fayette.

road from Barren Hill to the Schuylkill River falls away rapidly behind a high bank on the northern side, so that, soon after leaving the church, an army marching in the direction of the river would disappear completely from the view of an observer standing upon the high ground, the direction from which a part of General Grant's force was approaching, or on the east, where General Grey was planning the attack. Leaving a small force to make a demonstration about the church, La Fayette gained time by throwing forward false heads of columns toward the north, where the country was heavily wooded, placing them in such a manner that they should appear to be emerging from the forest, for the purpose of misleading General Grant, whilst he formed the remainder of his detachment in marching order and quietly dropped down the road to the Schuylkill. The false heads of columns arrested the attention of General Grant and held him long enough for the successful execution of this movement; for whilst he hesitated the Americans were slipping away.

La Fayette appointed General Poor to command the van, and sent with him his most trusted aide-de-camp, M. de Gimat, whilst he remained behind, and, when sufficient time had elapsed, brought up the rear with all his men. The march was so successfully accomplished that his whole detachment passed safely through Spring Mill and beyond the point at which General Grant could have intercepted it, reaching the passage of the Schuylkill at Matson's Ford and crossing in safety without losing a man,[1] just as the British, who had in the mean time discovered the deception, came up in pursuit. Once upon the other side of the river, La Fayette drew up his men to prepare for an attack and to contest the passage of the ford if the enemy should decide to follow him; but he was left unmo-

[1] Mémoires de ma Main, i. p. 48. Stedman says, however, that the British cavalry "killed or took about forty." History of the American War, i. 378.

lested; for they retired after having halted for a short time upon the eastern bank, within full sight of his retreating column, the British cavalry and hussars having been detached in a fruitless attempt to overtake him; and Lieutenant Wickham, who was present, said that when he saw La Fayette's men dotting the water as they forded the Schuylkill they reminded him of "the corks of a fishing seine."[1] In the mean time, General Clinton, advancing along the Ridge Road, quickly drove in the outposts at the very time that La Fayette was retreating, and he is said to have been exceedingly surprised and angered when, upon his arrival at Barren Hill Church, he found nothing there but a column of red-coats marching toward him from the opposite direction, with no enemy anywhere in sight. The only encounter which actually took place occurred a little before that time with General Clinton's advance guard, and it was one of the most curious in the course of the war. A company of British dragoons, moving along the Ridge Road near Barren Hill, came suddenly upon the Iroquois of La Fayette's force, who were doing picket duty at that point: the savages started up from the ground with their mad war-whoop, and, terrified by the cavalry, which they had never seen before, they instantly fled; whilst the dragoons, on their side, were thrown into such disorder by a sight and a sound equally new to them, that they retreated hastily in the opposite direction.

The British troops had had a long and fatiguing march, which ended now in mortification and disappointment; and, without attempting any further enterprise against the Continental army, General Clinton and General Howe led their soldiers back to Philadelphia, as La Fayette said, "very tired, very much ashamed, and very much laughed at" for their exploit.[2] The Marquis de La Fayette re-

[1] Simcoe's Military Journal, p. 61.

[2] Mémoires de La Fayette, i. 76, Fragment D.

mained all night at the western side of Matson's Ford, and upon the following day, having ascertained the withdrawal of the British, he recrossed the river and took up his former position at Barren Hill; after which he proceeded to the northward, by the road which he had originally taken in leaving the camp of the army, and, passing over again at Swedes' Ford, arrived safely at Valley Forge. The alarm-guns which he had fired the day before had been heard in the camp, where the forces were hastily put under arms, and they had been a source of great anxiety to General Washington, who apprehended not only serious difficulty but also an injury to, possibly even the destruction of, one of the choicest bodies of his troops. He welcomed the detachment back with infinite pleasure. After having heard their story in detail, he gave the young commander credit for his good judgment and skill, and in writing to Congress, a few days later, he took occasion to mention him with distinction, as follows:[1] "On the night of the 19th the enemy moved out in force against the detachment under the Marquis de Lafayette, mentioned in my letter of the 18th, which made a timely and handsome retreat in great order over the Schuylkill at Matson's Ford. Our loss was nine men in the whole. The enemy's loss is supposed to be something more. Their march was circuitous and rapid, and I should imagine many of their men suffered from it. General Clinton, it is said, commanded in person."

It is doubtful if the Marquis de La Fayette ever fully realized how important a crisis for him was this affair at Barren Hill. The subsequent incidents of his life brought reverses, disappointments, sorrows, imprisonment, and defeat, all the vicissitudes that go to make up the sum of experience in a long and eventful career, during which he was applauded, criticised, admired, or

[1] Letter to the President of Congress, 24th May, 1778: Sparks, Writings of Washington, v. 377.

condemned, according to the feelings that his actions aroused among friends and enemies amid the frightful social disorders through which he was destined to live; but none of these wrought a personal injury comparable with the blight that must have fallen upon him if his service in the United States had been suddenly cut short on that eventful day in May, 1778. If the misfortune had overtaken him then of being captured by the British, upon the first occasion when he had been intrusted with a separate command, involving, as it would have done, the loss to the Continental army of an extremely valuable body of men, the chances are that he would have been overwhelmed by the consequences, and that his influence would have been damaged beyond repair. The hold he had at that time upon the affairs of the nation was comparatively slight; it might have been broken, and the memory of La Fayette would have become that of a mere incident in the War of Independence; he would not have had an opportunity to render to this country the valuable services which he rendered afterward, in the councils of war, and in his relations with the French Government and with the French troops in America, as well as on the field of battle; nor would he have been rewarded for the high-minded zeal and self-sacrifice which have forever endeared him to the American people.

The British sentiment of the time, in Philadelphia, affected to regard this expedition with contempt, probably with a view to concealing the mortification which it really caused in the British army. "The Royal Pennsylvania Gazette" announced that "Intelligence being received that Mr. Washington and his tattered retinue had abandoned their mud holes and were on the march to Germantown, a detachment of British and Hessian troops went out to meet and escort them into the city; but the rebels, being apprised of their approach, flew back with precipitation to what they call their camp, determined to act no further

on the offensive than might be consistent with their personal safety." But, in spite of this pretended scorn for American affairs, common enough, no doubt, at that period, in discussing them, we know, through a letter of Colonel Laurens to his father,[1] "that General Grant had escaped a court martial for his conduct on the affair of Marquis de Lafayette, by his powerful interest, but that he was much blamed and abused in circles of officers." And a little more than one month later the splendidly appointed army of Sir Henry Clinton was in full retreat through New Jersey, with "Mr. Washington and his tattered retinue" in pursuit.

An incident occurred at Valley Forge about this time which illustrates the confidence with which La Fayette was looked to by his soldiers in matters relating to their personal interests, and the good will with which he responded to their wishes, even when he did not agree with their views. An objection was made by some of the officers under his command to the oath of allegiance recently prescribed by Congress, which was to be administered to every officer in the service of the United States, a certificate as to his having taken it being duly forwarded to the office of the Adjutant-General. Whilst the provisions of this order were being carried out in the camp, an extraordinary unwillingness, probably growing out of a mistaken conception upon the part of some officers as to the indirect result which such an obligation might have upon future promotion in the service, manifested itself among the Virginia troops in General Woodford's brigade. There is no evidence of disloyalty upon their part; on the contrary, the officers appear to have subscribed to the oath, though under protest as to the peculiar objections conceived by themselves, which really

[1] John Laurens to Henry Laurens, 15th June, 1778: The Army Correspondence of Colonel John Laurens, by Wm. Gilmore Simms, Publications of the Bradford Club, New York, 1867.

were based upon no reasonable foundation, and do not seem to have been suggested in any other part of the army. The difficulty evidently arose from an exceedingly narrow interpretation of the form of the act of allegiance itself, and especially of the words "and will serve the said United States in the office of ——, which I now hold."[1]

After a discussion with the Marquis de La Fayette of the questions which seemed to them to be involved, but which, in his opinion, did not affect their relations to the army in the manner they had assumed, La Fayette acceded to their request that he should submit their case to the Commander-in-Chief, whereupon twenty-six of these officers prepared and delivered to him the following memorial:

"1. The tenor of the oath they in some measure consider an indignity; they will not undertake to determine it unnecessary; an indignity, as it presupposes that some of them have acted contrary to their sentiments; it may be unnecessary, for those officers, who ventured their lives and fortunes in support of American Independence, could have no other reason but the apparent one.

"2. As many officers at present are injured in their rank, and cannot possibly continue in the army exactly in their present situation, they apprehend it would be an impropriety in them to swear to continue in their present posts, as the rank of the juror is to be taken when the oath is administered.

"3. Would not the oath debar an officer from the privilege of resigning, when circumstances might render it indispensably necessary that he should quit the army?

"4. The taking of the oath, while the present establishment

[1] The oath was as follows: "I do acknowledge the United States of America to be free, independent, and sovereign States, and declare that the people thereof owe no allegiance or obedience to George the Third, King of Great Britain; and I renounce, refuse, and abjure any allegiance or obedience to him; and I do swear, (or affirm), that I will, to the utmost of my power, support, maintain, and defend the said United States against the said King George the Third, and his heirs and successors, and his or their abettors, assistants, and adherents, and will serve the said United States in the office of——, which I now hold, with fidelity, according to the best of my skill and understanding. So help me God."—Journals of Congress, 3d February, 1778.

continues, most of the subscribers are of opinion, would lay them under a pointed restraint in endeavoring to procure a change, which the whole army have long, not only most ardently wished for, but conceived absolutely necessary for its preservation; a change, that would put them on an honorable and advantageous footing."[1]

General de La Fayette forwarded this document to headquarters with the following letter to the Commander-in-Chief:[2]

"Valley Forge Camp, the 15th May, 1778.

"My dear General,—Agreeable to your excellency's orders, I have taken the oath of the gentlemen officers in General Woodford's brigade, and their certificates have been sent to the adjutant general's office. Give me leave, now, to present you with some observations delivered to me by many officers in that brigade, who desire me to submit them to your perusal. I know, Sir, (besides I am not of their opinion in the fact itself), that I should not accept for you the objections those gentlemen could have had, as a body, to any order from Congress; but I confess the desire of being agreeable to them, of giving them any mark of friendship and affection which is in my power, and acknowledging the kind sentiments they honour me with, have been my first and dearest considerations. Besides that, be pleased to consider that they began by obeying orders, and want only to let their beloved general know which were the reasons of their being rather reluctant, (as far as reluctance may comply with their duty and honour), to an oath, the meaning and spirit of which was, I believe, misunderstood by them. I may add, Sir, with a perfect conviction, that there is not one among them but would be thrice happy were occasions offered to them of distinguishing yet, by new exertions, their love for their country, their zeal for their duty as officers, their consideration for the civil superior power, and their love for your excellency.

"With the greatest respect and most tender affection,—I have the honour to be, &c."

To which General Washington replied as follows:[3]

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[1] Sparks, Writings of Washington, v. 367, note.

[2] La Fayette's Correspondence, American edition, p. 170.

[3] Ibid., p. 171.

"CAMP, 17 May, 1778.

"DEAR SIR,—I received yesterday your favour of the 15th instant, enclosing a paper subscribed by sundry officers of General Woodford's brigade, setting forth the reasons for not taking the oath of abjuration, allegiance, and office; and I thank you much for the cautious delicacy used in communicating the matter to me. As every oath should be a free act of the mind, founded on the conviction of its propriety, I would not wish, in any instance, that there should be the least degree of compulsion exercised; nor to interpose my opinion, in order to induce any to make it, of whom it is required. The gentlemen, therefore, who signed the paper, will use their own discretion in the matter, and swear or not swear, as their conscience and feelings dictate.

"At the same time, I cannot but consider it as a circumstance of some singularity, that the scruples against the oath should be peculiar to the officers of one brigade, and so very extensive. The oath in itself is not new. It is substantially the same with that required in all governments, and, therefore, does not imply any indignity; and it is perfectly consistent with the professions, actions, and implied engagements of every officer. The objection founded on the supposed unsettled rank of the officers, is of no validity, rank being only mentioned as a further designation of the party swearing; nor can it be seriously thought that the oath is either intended to prevent, or can prevent, their being promoted, or their resignation.

"The fourth objection, stated by the gentlemen, serves as a key to their scruples; and I would willingly persuade myself, that their own reflections will point out to them the impropriety of the whole proceeding, and not suffer them to be betrayed in future into a similar conduct. I have a regard for them all, and cannot but regret that they were ever engaged in the measure. I am certain they will regret it themselves,—sure I am, that they ought. I am, my dear Marquis, Your affectionate friend and servant."

No further action appears to have been taken upon this subject by the officers who signed the memorial, and the incident terminated, so far as we know, with this letter from General Washington to M. de La Fayette.

CHAPTER XI.

RETREAT OF THE BRITISH ARMY, AND BATTLE OF MONMOUTH.

The uncertainty of communication by letter between Europe and America at this period of the Revolution was a source of great anxiety to M. de La Fayette. Many weeks, and even months, passed away without bringing him news from his wife and children, whose welfare was constantly in his thoughts. His longing to hear from them became so great at times as to cause him mental suffering which far outweighed the privations to which he was subjected, in common with all the army, at Valley Forge. Of these latter he never complained; but the uncertainty as to his family, whether they were well, whether his second child was born, whether it was a son or a daughter, the thousand questions that suggest themselves to a father's heart in a long absence from home, made the distance across the Atlantic seem to him unlimited in its immensity, and caused the days to lag interminably as they passed by. "Strive at least," he wrote to Mme. de La Fayette, "to give me some consolation. Do not neglect a single opportunity of sending me word of yourself. I have not had news of any one for millions of centuries! My situation is a cruel one indeed, in this frightful ignorance of all those who are dear to me."[1] His own letters to France, as also those written to him from home, were sent as occasion offered; sometimes by French officers returning home, or by those coming to America, sometimes by the hands of private

[1] Correspondance de La Fayette, i. 169.

gentlemen crossing the ocean, or by ship-captains whose vessels were going directly to ports from which letters could be forwarded, or even by means so extremely uncertain that there was but the merest chance of their arriving at their destination. Aside from accidental delay, from possible negligence upon the part of the numerous carriers to whom letters were confided, and from actual loss, there was always the danger of capture at sea to be taken into account by any vessel entering or leaving the American ports. In view of the ever-present likelihood of falling in with British cruisers, La Fayette said,[1] "I never write a word to send to Europe without feeling sad for the destiny that awaits it. And certainly, in this regard, I work more for Lord Howe than for any one of my friends." It is remarkable, under the circumstances, that so many letters arrived as we know to have done so; for, while many undoubtedly were lost, possibly the greater number, yet the published correspondence of M. de La Fayette shows that those intended for him occasionally finished their long and circuitous voyages and came to his hand. An interesting example of this method of correspondence is thus described by M. de La Fayette himself in writing to his wife from the camp at Whitemarsh:[2]

"You will receive this letter, perhaps, in the course of five or six years, for I am writing to you by an indirect opportunity of which I have no great hopes. Fancy the long journey that my letter will have to make. An officer of the army will take it to Fort Pitt, three hundred miles in the interior of the continent; thence it will be sent by a boat down the great Ohio River, through a country inhabited only by savages; when once it reaches New Orleans, a little vessel will take it to the Spanish Islands; from there a ship belonging to that nation will carry it,—God knows when,—whenever it goes back to Europe. Even then it will be

[1] To the Duc D'Ayen: Correspondance de La Fayette, i. 124.
[2] Correspondance de La Fayette, i. 115.

a long way from you; and only after passing through the sticky hands of all the Spanish postmen will it be able to cross the Pyrenees. It may have been opened and sealed half a dozen times before coming to you; but then, at last, it will give proof to my dear heart that I neglect no opportunity, even the most remote, to send news to her of myself and to repeat to her how much I love her."

Whilst he was upon the road toward the camp at Valley Forge, in December, 1777, La Fayette received the news of the birth of his second daughter, Anastasie,[1] which had taken place at Paris on the 1st of July, 1777; and, although he appears to have wished very earnestly for a son at that time, to inherit his name and his title, as well as to add lustre to the house of Noailles, this event gave him exceeding pleasure. His letters show the joy that filled his heart at the thought of "embracing his two little girls" upon his return home. Unfortunately, however, there was sad news on the way for him. He learned, soon afterward, of the death of his eldest daughter, Henriette. La Fayette loved this child fondly; he spoke of her constantly in writing to Mme. de La Fayette, he sent affectionate messages to her, and asked to be told of her, how she was growing, whether she remembered him, picturing to himself the while what happiness he should have in taking her into his arms again,—the little daughter who was to be not only his companion, but his best friend, for life. "For you know I am very fond of telling news," he wrote.[2] "I beg you to be so, dear heart, in everything you say about me to Henriette,—my poor little Henriette; kiss her a thousand times for me, talk to her of me; but do not tell her all the ill of me that I deserve. I shall be punished enough if she does not recognize me when I return. That shall be the penance that Henriette shall impose upon me."

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[1] Afterward Madame Charles de Latour-Maubourg.

[2] Correspondance de La Fayette, i. 106.

And again,[1] "I am sure I shall find my poor little Henriette very gentle and attractive when I return. I hope she will scold me well, and that she will talk to me with all the freedom of friendship; for my daughter will always be, I hope, the best friend I have. I shall want to be a father only in the sense of loving her, and my paternal affection will adjust itself perfectly to the relation of close friendship between us."

The death of this child was a heavy blow to him. In his intense sorrow he wrote to Mme. de La Fayette from Valley Forge,[2] "How terrible my separation has become! I have never felt before the horror of my situation. My heart is full of my own grief, and of yours which I was not with you to share; and the great length of time that elapsed before I heard this news adds to my distress. Imagine, my dear heart, my cruel situation: whilst I mourn for the one I have lost, I tremble for the safety of those who are still left to me. The distance from Europe to America never seemed so immense to me as it does now. The dreadful loss of our child is in my thoughts every moment of the day. This news came to me immediately after that of the treaty, and whilst I was bowed down with grief I had to accept congratulations and take part in the public rejoicing."

Early in the morning of the 18th of June, 1778, Sir Henry Clinton with the British army evacuated Philadelphia. Having crossed the Delaware River to Gloucester, he set out upon his line of march through New Jersey toward New York; his force was divided into two columns, one of which he led himself and the other was under Lieutenant-General Knyphausen, aggregating some seventeen thousand effective men, with artillery, full military equipment, and an immense baggage-train which

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[1] Correspondance de La Fayette, i. 114.

[2] 16th June, 1778: Ibid., i. 177.

MAP

To illustrate the Military Operations which led to te

BATTLE OF MONMOUTH

Compiled for Charlemagne Tower Jr.,

by A. B. Cochran & Son, CIVIL ENGINEERS.

1894.

SCALE OF MILES.

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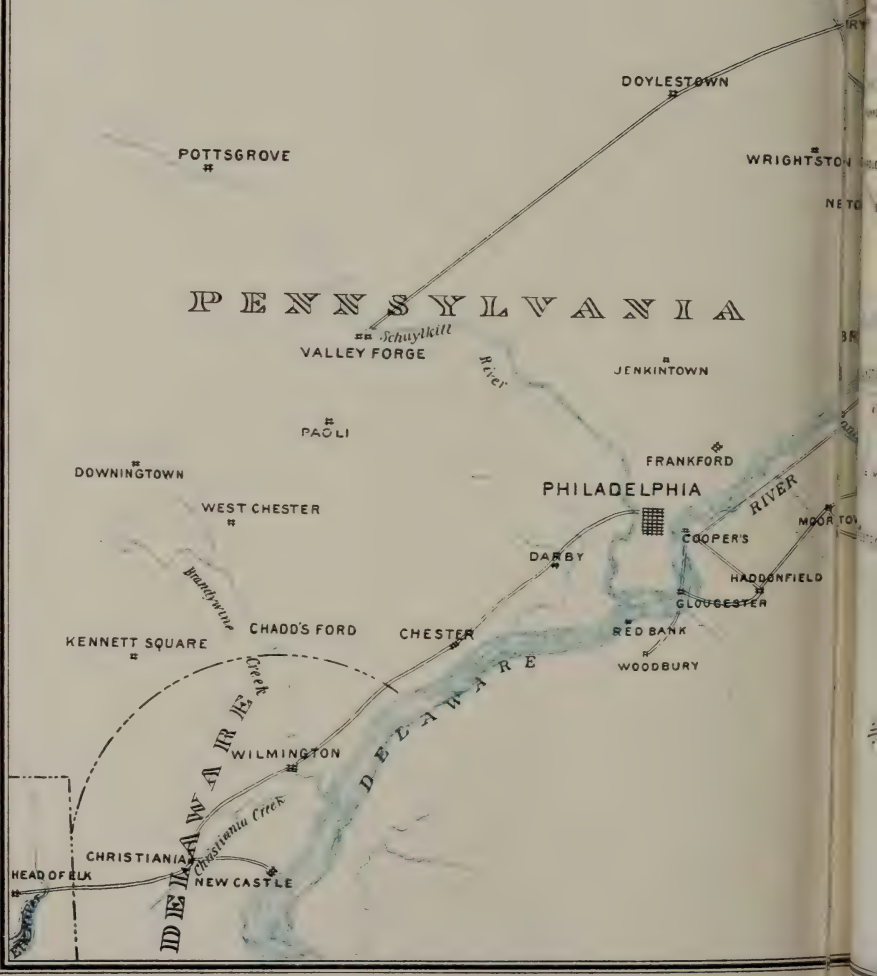

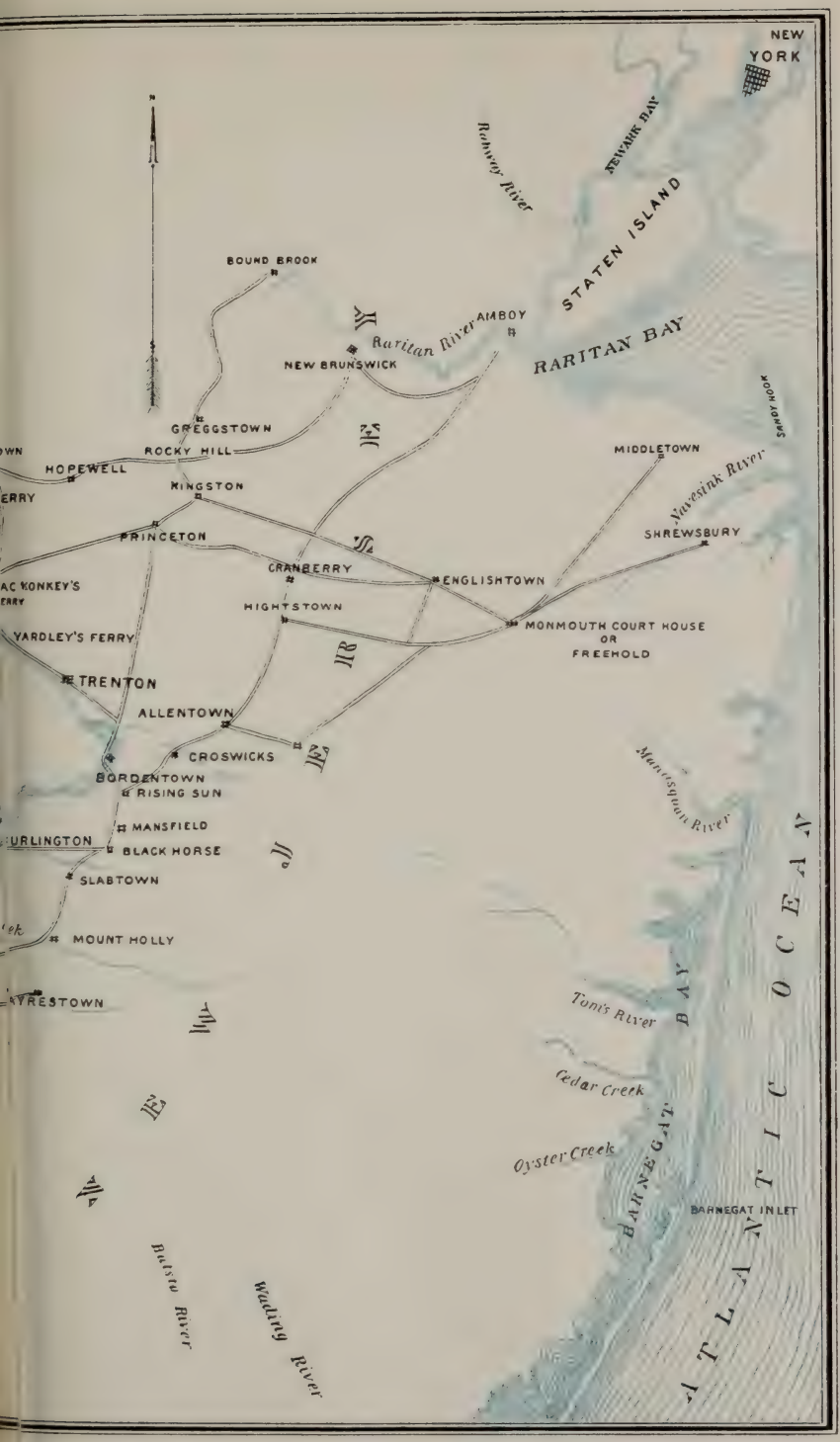
NEW YORK
Rahway River
NEWARK BAY
STATEN ISLAND
BOUND BROOK
Raritan River
AMBOY
NEW BRUNSWICK
RARITAN BAY
SANDY HOOK
GREGGSTOWN
ROCKY HILL
HOPEWELL
KINGSTON
PRINCETON
MIDDLETOWN
Navesink River
SHREWSBURY
CRANBERRY
ENGLISHTOWN
HIGHTSTOWN
MONMOUTH COURT HOUSE OR FREEHOLD
YARDLEY'S FERRY
TRENTON
ALLENTOWN
CROSWICKS
BORDENTOWN
RISING SUN
MANSFIELD
BLACK HORSE
SLABTOWN
MOUNT HOLLY
Manasquan River
Toms River
Cedar Creek
Oyster Creek
BARNEGAT BAY
BARNEGAT INLET
ATLANTIC OCEAN
Rancocas River
Wading River

stretched for nearly twelve miles along the country roads. Proceeding by way of Haddonfield, Mount Holly, and Crosswicks, he advanced to Allentown and Imlaytown, where he arrived a week later, having marched in that time only about forty miles. It was impossible, up to that point, for the American Commander-in-Chief to determine with accuracy the purpose of the British general; for until he should have passed beyond Allentown there were two roads open to him, the one leading directly to Amboy, and the other, more circuitous, to Sandy Hook. Nor was it less difficult to decide from the appearance of his army what policy he intended to adopt,—whether to retreat silently to join the garrison at New York, or to open hostilities in an active campaign. The slowness of his march might indicate the latter purpose, from one point of view; for, while his progress was unquestionably retarded by the weather, which was rainy at that time and exceedingly hot, yet there were details of his movement that appeared to indicate an intention of bringing on a general engagement in New Jersey with the American army. As an alternative to this, it was believed by some that he aimed at an occupation of the passes through the highlands along the Hudson River.

General Washington, who was fully on the alert as to every movement of the enemy, summoned his generals to a council of war, at Valley Forge, on the 17th of June, as soon as it became evident that an operation of some importance was about to be undertaken from Philadelphia. To this council he submitted the questions, whether any enterprise ought to be attempted against the enemy at once; whether the army should retain its present position until the completed evacuation of Philadelphia, or should immediately cross the Delaware; whether, if the enemy should march through New Jersey, it would be prudent to attack them on their road, or whether it were deemed better to advance directly to the Hudson River in

order to secure the communication between New England and the other States; finally, whether, in the event of overtaking the enemy in New Jersey, a partial or a general attack should be made. The opinions given by the general officers were so varied in their conclusions that General Washington requested each to reply in writing upon the following day. This was done accordingly, but by that time the movement of the British into New Jersey had become known, and the question for consideration was whether they should be attacked upon the march. Most of the officers were opposed to an attack, on account of the inequality of force; prominent among whom was General Charles Lee, then second in command, whose insidious arguments, no doubt, influenced many of them, and whose treacherous proceeding already begun came very near being the means, a short time afterward, of bringing immeasurable disaster upon the Continental army, at Monmouth.

In spite of Lee's attempts, however, to deter American soldiers from attacking their enemy in the field when the interests of their country presented an opportunity for its defence, the Commander-in-Chief held to his purpose of carrying on the war by fighting the British as he had done before; and he was supported in this decision by General Greene, General Wayne, General Cadwalader, and the Marquis de La Fayette. He determined to follow Sir Henry Clinton into New Jersey and to attack him if an opportunity should present. He ordered General Philemon Dickinson, who was then collecting the New Jersey militia, to begin active operations immediately in order to impede the British army, by destroying bridges ahead of it, by felling trees across the roads, and by embarrassing it in every other possible manner upon its march; and General Maxwell was sent forward with a New Jersey brigade to assist him in this operation. General Washington set out with the main body of the army from Valley Forge on the 19th of June, and proceeded to

the Delaware River, which he crossed on the 22d at Coryell's Ferry; and upon the following day he took up a strong position on the eastern side of the river, at Hopewell. He had ordered General Lee on the 18th to set out with three brigades, ahead of the army, to cross at Coryell's Ferry and to halt at the first strong position after passing the Delaware, till further orders, unless he should receive authentic intelligence that the enemy had proceeded by a direct route to South Amboy, or still lower; in which event he was to march to the North River.[1] He also directed General Wayne, with two Pennsylvania regiments and the brigade formerly of General Conway, to follow General Lee's division to Coryell's Ferry, leaving a proper distance between the two commands, so that they should not interfere with each other.[2] The remainder of the army left Valley Forge in three divisions, the first of which, composed of General Woodford's and General Scott's brigades and the North Carolina brigade, was commanded by the Marquis de La Fayette; the other two were under the Baron de Kalb and Lord Stirling, respectively.

When General Washington had crossed the Delaware with his army and had taken his position in Hopewell Township, about five miles from Princeton, Sir Henry Clinton was encamped in the neighborhood of Allentown, a little to the east of the river, upon the road leading toward Amboy. On the 24th of June, Washington detached a considerable force to reconnoitre the enemy's position and to harass them upon their flanks and in the rear, by which disposition Colonel Morgan's corps was directed to gain their right flank, General Maxwell to hang upon the left, and General Scott to gall their left flank and rear, while General Cadwalader, with two or

[1] Postscript to General Lee's Instructions: Lee Papers, New York Historical Society, ii. 407.

[2] Instructions to General Wayne: Sparks, Writings of Washington, v. 411.

three hundred Continental troops and his volunteers, advanced directly in the rear.[1] Upon the same day, in order to decide what course to pursue from this point, in view of the positions of the two armies, Washington called a council of war, to which he submitted the question whether it were advisable to hazard a general action, and, if so, whether it should be brought on by an immediate general attack, by a partial attack, or by taking such a position as must compel the enemy to become the assailants. Here again, as before at Valley Forge, General Lee, who appears to have been desperate in his attempt to secure for the British army an undisturbed passage through New Jersey, vehemently denounced the policy of attacking it; with great eloquence and skilful address he argued that instead of molesting the retreating enemy it would be the part of wisdom to help them forward, even to build a bridge of gold to let them pass; that the United States were just upon the threshold of a powerful foreign alliance, which ought to be fostered and encouraged in every possible way, and that that was not the moment in which everything should be placed at the hazard of a single throw; and, besides this, the British army had never before been so well disciplined, nor so dangerous to attack. In conclusion, he proposed that the American forces should advance immediately to White Plains.[2]

The boldness and plausibility of his harangue carried with him, as upon the former occasion, the sentiment of very many of the officers present, especially of Lord Stirling and of the brigadier-generals; so that the council of war gave its decision against the policy of attack. The Marquis de La Fayette, however, stood manfully by the other view. His turn to speak came late in the council, after the others had given their opinions; but he presented

[1] To General Dickinson: Sparks, Writings of Washington, v. 417.

[2] La Fayette, Mémoires de ma Main, i. 50.

his arguments with great earnestness in favor of striking a blow at an enemy who were retiring before them, only a day's march from the army, and he appealed, with the whole force of his soldierly instincts aroused, to American honor, patriotism, and gallantry not to allow an opportunity such as that to pass unimproved; it would be a shame to the leaders of the army, he said, and a humiliation to the soldiers, if the British could traverse the whole country of New Jersey unmolested; they ought to be pursued, in any event, and, if nothing more were done, their rear-guard ought to be attacked; the army should manœuvre in such a manner as to take advantage of position, and watch for a possible separation of forces to cut off detachments, and, if an opportunity presented itself, to strike. He won the support of a few officers, though the majority voted with General Lee. That same evening he continued his arguments before General Washington, in presence of several of the officers, and upon that occasion he was seconded by General Greene and Colonel Alexander Hamilton.

The council of war had not agreed to General Lee's proposal to advance to White Plains; on the contrary, although it decided against a general attack upon the enemy, it favored the reinforcement of the troops then upon the British left flank, by fifteen hundred men, to serve as occasion might offer. Thereupon General Scott was immediately sent forward to the lines with that force; and upon the following day, the 25th of June, the army advanced to Kingston. General Washington's purpose, which he maintained through all the wavering opinions of his officers, with that exalted self-possession which never forsook him, was to engage the enemy. Their superior discipline and equipment were no arguments to induce him to stand idly by and look on with his army in order that a hostile British force might quietly traverse one of the American States. He felt no inclination to provide

them with a bridge of gold. His determination was fixed, to act at once, upon his own responsibility if need be, and upon his own judgment of what was right. His views in this direction began to influence some of his generals upon whom he relied, and who were now ready to sustain him.

On the 25th of June, word was brought to him that Sir Henry Clinton had moved forward from Allentown and was marching in the direction of Monmouth Court-House; whereupon, with a view to strengthening his advanced forces upon the lines, he ordered General Wayne forward with a detachment of one thousand selected troops. With this addition, the American force then operating against the enemy, in advance of the main army, aggregated between four and five thousand men; and it had become of such importance, from its position and its character, as well as from the circumstances governing his situation, that Washington determined to appoint a major-general to take command of it. This duty fell by right of rank to General Lee, who declined it. General Washington thereupon appointed the Marquis de La Fayette to take command.

His instructions were as follows:[1]

"To the Marquis de Lafayette:

"Sir,—You are immediately to proceed with the detachment commanded by General Poor, and form a junction as expeditiously as possible with that under the command of General Scott. You are to use the most effectual means for gaining the enemy's left flank and rear, and giving them every degree of annoyance. All Continental parties, that are already on the lines, will be under your command, and you will take such measures, in concert with General Dickinson, as will cause the enemy the greatest impediment and loss in their march. For these purposes you will attack them as occasion may require by detachment, and, if a proper opening should be given, by operating against them with the whole force of your command. You will naturally take such precautions, as will secure you against surprise, and maintain your

[1] Sparks, Writings of Washington, v. 417.

communication with this army. Given at Kingston, this 25th day of June, 1778."

General de La Fayette received this order with great pleasure. It accorded with his opinion expressed in the council of war; it offered him an opportunity which he had earnestly desired ever since he came to America, to command an active force against the enemy in the field, and opened the way to distinction if he should succeed in acquitting himself acceptably; besides this, he was acting under the immediate supervision of General Washington in carrying out a plan which the Commander-in-Chief had himself prepared and as to the success of which he felt very great solicitude. Successful management upon this occasion would have meant much even to any of the more experienced officers of the army; it meant everything to an ambitious young soldier like La Fayette. Certainly no offer could have been more flattering. He seized it gladly, and set out at once with his detachment upon the course marked out in his instructions.

By the evening of the same day he had advanced to Cranberry, whence he wrote to General Washington as follows:[1]

"Cranberry, half-past nine o'clock.
"[25th] June, 1778.

"Dear General,—Inclosed I have the honor to send you a letter which Colonel Hamilton was going to send me from this place when I arrived with the detachment, and which may give you an idea of the position of the enemy. I will try to meet and collect as soon as possible our forces, tho' I am sorry to find the enemy so far down that way. We will be obliged to march pretty fast, if we want to attack them. It is for that I am particularly concerned about provisions. I send back immediately for the purpose, and beg you would give orders to have them forwarded as speedily as possible, and directed to march fast, for I believe we must set out early to-morrow morning. The detachment is in a wood, covered by Cranberry Creek, and I believe extremely

[1] Lee Papers, New York Historical Society, ii. 415.

safe. We want to be very well furnished with spirits as a long and quick march may be found necessary, and if General Scott's detachment is not provided, it should be furnished also with liquor; but the provisions of this detachment are the most necessary to be sent as soon as possible, as we expect them to march.

"If anything new comes to my knowledge, I will immediately write your Excellency, and I will send an express in the morning.

"I have the honor to be &c.

"LAFAYETTE.

"I wish also we could get some axes, but it should not stop the so important affairs of provisions."

The letter from Colonel Hamilton which La Fayette enclosed in the foregoing was as follows:

"25 June, 1778.

"SIR,—We find on our arrival here that the intelligence received on the road is true. The enemy have all filed off from Allen Town, on the Monmouth Road. Their rear is said to be a mile westward of Lawrence Taylor's tavern, six miles from Allen Town. General Maxwell is at Hyde's Town, about three miles from this place. General Dickinson is said to be on the enemy's right flank; but where, cannot be told. We can hear nothing certain of General Scott; but, from circumstances he is probably at Allen Town. We shall, agreeably to your request, consider and appoint some proper place of rendezvous for the union of our force, which we shall communicate to Generals Maxwell and Scott, and to yourself. In the meantime I would recommend to you to move toward this place as soon as the convenience of your men will permit. I am told that Colonel Morgan is on the enemy's right flank. We had a slight skirmish with their rear this forenoon, at Robert Montgomery's, on the Monmouth Road, leading from Allen Town. We shall see General Maxwell immediately, and you will hear from us again. Send this to the General after reading it.

"I am your ob't Serv't,

"ALEX. HAMILTON.

"DOCTOR STILE'S HOUSE, CRANBERRY TOWN, 9 o'clock.

"We are just informed that General Scott passed by Hooper's Tavern, five miles from Allen Town, this afternoon at five o'clock."

La Fayette was in excellent spirits, advancing upon the enemy, who were then but a short distance ahead of him,

moving toward Monmouth Court-House: full of animation at the thought of engaging them, his only fear was that he might not be able to come up with them; but he determined, at all events, to push forward. He wrote again to General Washington, early the following morning,[1]—

"At Cranberry, 5 o'clock, June [26th], 1778.

"Dear General,—I have received your orders for marching as fast as I could, and I have marched without waiting for the provisions tho' we want them extremely. General Forman and Colonel Hamilton sat out last night to meet the other troops and we shall be together at Hidestown or somewhat lower. General Forman is firmly of opinion that we may overtake the enemy,—for my part I am not so quiet upon the subject as he is, but his sentiment is of great weight on account of his knowledge of the country. It is highly pleasant to me to be followed and countenanced by the army that if we stop the enemy and meet with some advantage they may push it with vigor. I have no doubt but if we overtake them we possess a very happy chance. However, I would not have the army quite so near as not to be quite master of its motions, but a very little distance may do it. I have heard nothing of the enemy this morning. An officer of militia says, that after they had pitched their tents yesterday night, they struck them again. But I am inclined to believe they did not go farther, and that the man who brought the intelligence was mistaken. I expect some at Hidestown which I will immediately forward to you. I beg when your Excellency will write to me, that you could let me know the place you have reached, that I might govern myself accordingly.

"With the highest respect I have the honor to be &c.

"Lafayette."

Up to this point the movement against the British army had been carried out precisely as General Washington intended, in execution of the plan which he had decided upon after concluding to assume the offensive,—namely, to press so closely upon the enemy's flanks and in their rear as to annoy and impede them as much as possible

[1] Lee Papers, New York Historical Society, ii. 416.

by the strong detachment thrown out ahead of his main body, now acting under the Marquis de La Fayette, whilst he should follow closely enough behind to maintain constant communication, in order that if the enterprise of the advanced force should lead to a counter-movement upon the British side and should result in a general engagement, which was very probable, he might come to its support at once with his entire strength and thus attack Sir Henry Clinton with the whole American army. The difficulty of manœuvring a retreating force through that part of New Jersey, over roads that necessarily presented many serious obstacles, especially in view of the impediment to the British army presented by its enormous baggage-train, which would require almost half its available force to protect, gave the American commander reasonable ground to hope for a happy issue to the event.

But at this point General Charles Lee, who was the controlling influence and at the same time the evil genius of the battle of Monmouth, interrupted the plan. It is not easy to determine his precise motive in the step that he took,—whether it was personal jealousy of the credit which La Fayette was likely to obtain from the expedition, in a command which he might have held himself if he would, that aroused him to the purpose of defeating the younger general's prospects now that they were brightening visibly as the campaign progressed, or whether he became alarmed at the vigorous hostility with which he saw that the enemy was about to be pursued and would certainly be attacked, in spite of his utmost exertions in the councils and in the camp to prevent it. The probability is that both these feelings agitated his wayward spirit, and fired him with selfishness and envious hate on the one hand, whilst they drove him, on the other, into the stubborn determination of carrying out his secret purpose by an act of deliberate treachery. He had no love for La Fayette; for in their views upon the progress

of the war they were so entirely opposed to each other that they could not become intimate friends, and Lee was a man who was by nature intensely jealous of other men's success.[1] He hated and opposed Washington throughout his whole career in the army. He longed for the chief command himself, and it was the hope of obtaining this, probably as much as anything else, that induced him to serve in America. He was an Englishman by birth, by education, by early military training, and he always remained an Englishman in sympathy. To have lived upon an estate in England, as an English gentleman, would have fulfilled his ideal of happiness. As it was, his heart was not in the war; he would gladly have aided the Commissioners to effect a reconciliation, and he was determined to secure for the British army, by every means that lay within his power, an undisturbed passage through New Jersey in this summer of 1778. The first move to make, therefore, at this time, was to stop the progress of La Fayette; otherwise it would be too late.

Lee acted upon this impulse immediately, by asking of General Washington the command of the advanced forces, which had been his in the beginning by seniority. He wrote as follows to the Commander-in-Chief:[2]

"Camp, at Kingston, 25 June, 1778.

"Dear General,—When I first assented to the Marquis de Lafayette's taking the command of the present detachment, I confess I viewed it in a very different light from that in which I view it at present. I considered it as a more proper business of a young, volunteering general, than of the second in command in the army; but I find it is considered in a different manner. They say that a corps consisting of six thousand men, the greater part chosen, is undoubtedly the most honorable command next to the Commander-in-Chief, that my ceding it would of course have

[1] "Son visage était laid, son esprit mordant, son cœur ambitieux et avare, son caractère incompatible, et toute sa personne originale."—Mémoires de ma Main, i. 49.

[2] Lee Papers, New York Historical Society, ii. 417.

an odd appearance. I must entreat, therefore, after making a thousand apologies for the trouble my rash assent has occasioned you, that, if this detachment does march, I may have the command of it. So far personally; but, to speak as an officer, I do not think that this detachment ought to march at all, until at least the head of the enemy's right column has passed Cranberry; then, if it is necessary to march the whole army, I cannot see any impropriety in the Marquis's commanding this detachment, or a greater, as an advanced guard of the army; but if this detachment, with Maxwell's corps, Scott's Morgan's and Jackson's, is to be considered as a separate, chosen, active corps, and put under the Marquis's command until the enemy leave the Jerseys, both myself and Lord Stirling will be disgraced.

"I am, dear General, Yours &c.

"CHARLES LEE."

Of course it was not a new discovery made now by General Lee that the advanced corps consisted of a body of select troops which the Commander-in-Chief designed to concentrate for active operations, under the command of a major-general. As second in command in the army, he was perfectly acquainted with what was taking place; and, besides, he was watching the conduct of this campaign as keenly as any other man in America. He had a special design in doing so. He had begun, even before the army moved out of Valley Forge, to put into execution this design, to shield the enemy, by trying to induce General Washington to draw off into the interior of Pennsylvania, along the Susquehanna River, upon an ingeniously contrived falsehood that Lee believed the British would move toward the south in the direction of the Head of Elk upon evacuating Philadelphia; by which reasoning, however, the Commander-in-Chief was not in the slightest degree deceived. General Lee had labored strenuously afterward in the councils of war to prevent an attack upon the British during their march. He had refused to command the advanced detachment, probably with the specific determination of not making the attack himself; and he now asked for the command

in order to prevent the attack from being made by somebody else. That this was his purpose, is evident from his subsequent conduct in the action. After having made his request to General Washington, he appealed to the Marquis de La Fayette to give up the command, saying to him, "I place my fortune and my honor in your hands; you are too generous to destroy both the one and the other."[1]

La Fayette's unselfish conduct throughout this affair does the highest honor to the qualities of his heart and mind. He was proud of his command; yet in the face of this appeal he consented to give it up, and he sent word at once to General Washington that he would serve under General Lee. A little later in the morning of the 26th, upon which, as we have seen, he had written to the Commander-in-Chief at five o'clock from Cranberry, he wrote again as follows:[2]

"Icetown [Hightstown], 26th June, 1778.
"at a quarter after seven.

"Dear General—I hope you have received my letter from Cranberry, where I acquaint you that I am going to Ice Town, though we are short of provisions. When I got there I was sorry to hear that Mr. Hamilton, who had been riding all the night, had not been able to find anybody who could give him certain intelligence; but by a party who came back, I hear the enemy are in motion, and their rear about one mile off the place they had occupied last night, which is seven or eight miles from here. I immediately put Generals Maxwell and Wayne's brigades in motion, and I will fall lower down, with General Scott's, with Jackson's regiment, and some militia. I should be very happy if we could attack them before they halt, for I have no notion of taking one other moment but this of the march. If I cannot overtake them, we could lay at some distance, and attack tomorrow morning, provided they don't escape in the night, which I much fear, as our intelligences are not the best ones. I have sent some parties out, and I will get some more light by them.

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[1] Mémoires de ma Main, i. 51.

[2] La Fayette's Correspondence, American edition, i. 178.

"I fancy your excellency will move down with the army, and if we are at a convenient distance from you, I have nothing to fear in striking a blow if opportunity is offered. I believe that, in our present strength, *provided they do not escape*, we may do something.

"General Forman says that, on account of the nature of the country, it is impossible for me to be turned by the right or left, but that I shall not quite depend upon.

"An officer just from the lines confirms the account of the enemy moving. An intelligence from General Dickinson says that they hear a very heavy fire in the front of the enemy's column. I apprehend it is Morgan, who had not received my letter, but it will have the good effect of stopping them, and if we attack, he may begin again.

"Sir, I want to repeat to you in writing what I have told to you, which is, that if you believe it, or if it is believed necessary or useful to the good of the service and the honour of General Lee, to send him down with a couple of thousand men, or any greater force; I will cheerfully obey and serve him, not only out of duty, but out of what I owe to that gentleman's character.

"I hope to receive, soon, your orders as to what I am to do this day or to-morrow, to know where you are and what you intend, and would be happy to furnish you with the opportunity of completing some little advantage of ours.

"LAFAYETTE.

"The road I understand the enemy are moving by, is the straight road to Monmouth."

Upon the same day General Washington wrote,[1]—

"CRANBERRY, 26th June, 1778.

"MY DEAR MARQUIS,—General Lee's uneasiness, on account of yesterday's transaction, rather increasing than abating, and your politeness in wishing to ease him of it, have induced me to detach him from this army with a part of it, to reinforce, or at least cover, the several detachments at present under your command. At the same time, that I felt for General Lee's distress of mind, I have had an eye to your wishes and the delicacy of your situation; and have, therefore, obtained a promise from him, that when he gives you notice of his approach and com-

[1] La Fayette's Correspondence, American edition, i. 180.

mand, he will request you to prosecute any plan you may have already concerted for the purpose of attacking, or otherwise annoying the enemy; this is the only expedient I could think of to answer the views of both. General Lee seems satisfied with the measure, and I wish it may prove agreeable to you, as I am, with the warmest wishes for your honour and glory, and with the sincerest esteem and affection—

"Your most obedient servant,

"G° WASHINGTON."

At the same time he took occasion to send the following to General Lee:[1]

"CRANBERRY, 26 June, 1778.

"DEAR SIR,—Your uneasiness on account of the command of yesterday's detachment fills me with concern, as it is not in my power fully to remove it without wounding the feelings of the Marquis de Lafayette. I have thought of an expedient, which though not quite equal to the views of either of you, may in some measure answer both; and that is, to make another detachment from this army for the purpose of aiding and supporting the several detachments now under command of the Marquis, and giving you the command of the whole, under certain restrictions; which the circumstances arising from your own conduct yesterday render almost unavoidable.

"The expedient I would propose is, for you to march towards the Marquis with Scott's and Varnum's brigades. Give him notice, that you are advancing to support him, and that you are to have command of the whole advanced body; but, as he may have formed some enterprise with the advice of the officers commanding the several corps under his command, which will not admit of delay or alteration, you will give him every assistance and countenance in your power. This, as I have observed before, is not quite the thing; but may possibly answer, in some degree, the views of both. That it may do so, and the public service receive benefit from the measure, is the sincere wish of, dear Sir,

"Your most obedient servant,

"G° WASHINGTON."

In the mean time, the Marquis de La Fayette was advancing against the enemy, with enthusiasm for the work

[1] Lee Papers, New York Historical Society, ii. 421.

that had been set, so happily in accordance with his own most ardent desire, for him to perform. He was almost upon the British; and, although the lack of provisions had proved an extremely annoying hinderance to his progress, he continued to strengthen his position, and so to maintain communication with the main army, then only a few miles away from him, that he began to anticipate the results of an attack which he would have made upon the enemy's flanks and rear the following day. If he had been permitted to do so, the history of that campaign would doubtless have been a very different page from the one we now read; it is probable that the whole war would have been influenced by it, and the final result more quickly attained. For, under the circumstances which governed him at that moment, Sir Henry Clinton was in danger of being seriously crippled in the action which threatened him; and it was precisely this that he had feared.

General Washington received the following report from La Fayette on the afternoon of the 26th:[1]

"At Robins's Tavern, half past four.
"26 June, 1778.

"Dear General,—I have received your excellency's favor notifying your arrival at Cranberry, and am glad to have anticipated your orders in not going too far. I have felt the unhappy effects of the want of provisions, for I dare say if we had not been stopped by it, as we were already within three miles of the enemy's rear, we would very easily have overtaken them and fought with advantage.

"I have consulted the general officers of the detachment, and the general opinions seems to be that I should march in the night near them, so as to attack the rear guard when on the march. We have also spoken of a night attack. The latter seems dangerous. The former will perhaps give them time of escaping, as it is impossible I would move quite close by them, at least nearer than three miles.—Col. Morgan is towards the right flank, Gen.

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[1] Lee's Papers, New York Historical Society, ii. 423.

Dickinson is a little upon the left, Gens. Scott and Maxwell have insisted upon going further down than we are now; for Wayne's and Jackson's corps they have not had provisions at all but will be able to march in the night. I beg you would let me know your intention and your opinion of the matter, my motions depend much upon what the army will do for countenancing them. I beg you would be very particular upon what you think proper to be done and what your excellency will do. I wish indeed you would anticipate the different cases which may happen according to the place where the enemy lays.—Gen. Wayne, Col. Hamilton and several officers have gone to reconnoitre it. I fancy they will lay about seven or eight miles from here. Your Excellency knows that by the direct road you are only three miles further from Monmouth than we are in this place.

"The enemy is said to march since this morning, with a great confusion and fright. Some prisoners have been made, and deserters come amazingly fast. I believe an happy blow would have the happiest effect, and I always regret the time we have lost by want of provisions.

"I beg you would answer to me immediately, and with the highest respect I have the honor to be &c.

"LAFAYETTE."

General Washington had moved forward with the main army from Kingston, where the baggage was left behind, with the purpose of maintaining his distance from the advanced corps under La Fayette in such a manner as to be able to support it in case its presence upon the enemy's rear should lead to an engagement; and on the 26th of June he was at Cranberry, whilst La Fayette had proceeded along the Monmouth road to a point about five miles distant from the British camp. The intense heat of the weather, from which the troops were suffering, and a storm that came on, prevented General Washington from advancing beyond Cranberry as he had intended to do; and, fearing that whilst his main body remained at Cranberry the advanced corps would be too far upon the right to make an attack, or to be supported in case of an operation against it on the part of the enemy, he sent an order, late in the afternoon

of that day, to the Marquis de La Fayette to file off by his left toward Englishtown.[1]

This order reached La Fayette too late for him to execute it in the evening; but he did so very early on the morning of the 27th, having written the following letter to General Washington to acknowledge the receipt of his instructions:[2]

"Half-past ten (P. M. 26th), June, 1778.

"DEAR GENERAL,—Your orders have reached me so late and found me in such a situation that it will be impossible to follow them as soon as I could wish. It is not on account of any other motive than the impossibility of moving the troops and making such a march immediately, for in receiving your letter I have given up the project of attacking the enemy, and I only wish to join Gen. Lee. I was even going to set out, but all the Brigadiers, Officers, &c. have represented that there was a material impossibility of moving troops in the situation where ours find themselves. I do not believe Gen. Lee is to make any attack tomorrow, for then I would have been directed to fall immediately upon them, without making 11 miles entirely out of the way. I am here as near as I will be at English Town. Tomorrow at two o'clock I will set off for that place.

"I do not know if Morgan's corps, the militia, &c. must be brought along with the other part of the detachment. Gen. Forman who don't approve much of that motion, says that our right flank must be secured, unless to incur the most fatal consequences for the whole army.

"I beg your pardon, Sir, if my letter is so badly written, but I want to send it soon and to rest one or two hours.

"I have the honor to be &c.

"LAFAYETTE."

The disappointment of M. de La Fayette evident in this letter was perhaps not unreasonable in view of his circumstances at that moment; for they obliged him to give up at once all hope of making the attack upon the enemy for which he had completed his plans during his

[1] Washington to the President of Congress, 1st July, 1778: Sparks, Writings of Washington, v. 422.

[2] Lee Papers, New York Historical Society, ii. 425.

operations with the advanced force, and it was especially hard for him to renounce that purpose at the moment when his wishes appeared upon the point of being realized. The position of the enemy was then so well taken, however, that it would have been out of the question to attack them without the support of the whole Continental army; they had marched that day with extreme caution, having placed all their baggage in front, and being protected in the rear by a strong concentrated force, with a rear-guard of a thousand men about four hundred paces from the main body. They lay encamped on the night of the 26th with their van slightly beyond Monmouth Court-House, in a position in which both wings were well protected. Colonel Alexander Hamilton, who was with La Fayette, and who happened to be writing to General Washington when the latter's order arrived to file off by the left, declared that "to attack them in this situation, without being supported by the whole army, would be folly in the extreme. . . . If it should be thought advisable to give the necessary support, the army can move to some position near the enemy's left flank, which would put them in a very awkward situation, with so respectable a body in their rear; and it would put it out of their power to turn either flank, should they be so disposed."[1]

Nevertheless, La Fayette obeyed his orders implicitly, and moved with his detachment before daylight, on the morning of the 27th of June, to Englishtown, whither he had been directed to proceed, it having become impossible to support him properly in his more remote position on the Monmouth road when General Washington had decided to advance from Cranberry by the road leading to Englishtown. Besides this, it was Washington's

[1] Hamilton to Washington, 26th June, 1778, Evening: Lee Papers, New York Historical Society, ii. 424.

intention to concentrate his forces as a matter of military precaution, in view of his proximity to the enemy.

Upon arriving at Englishtown, La Fayette yielded the command of the advanced detachment to General Lee, under whom he then served until the crisis came upon the following day at the battle of Monmouth.

This action, which took place upon the 28th of June, 1778, is the most confusing in its movements, and the most difficult to present, or to follow in detail, of any of the battles during the Revolutionary War; chiefly, no doubt, from the fact that it was not fought upon any principle, or with regard to any general plan calculated either from the disposition of the enemy, the nature of the ground, or the advantages possessed by the Continental army;[1] the troops were allowed to waste their efforts in small, disunited parties; they were annoyed and confused by conflicting orders; and, after having been completely disorganized, they were thrown into an unnecessary and, as it was justly called at the time, a *shameful* retreat. It is a remarkable case, of a detachment in excellent spirits, fully prepared for action, and almost within musket-shot of the enemy, suddenly turned away, distracted and almost entirely destroyed, through the treachery of its commander.

On the night of the 27th of June the positions of the two armies were as follows. General Washington had advanced with the main body of his troops along the road leading to Englishtown, and was encamped about three miles west of that place; General Lee was at Englishtown with his command; Colonel Morgan's corps was very close upon the enemy's right flank, while General Dickinson, with the Jersey militia, was upon their left:[2] thus

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[1] J. Laurens to Henry Laurens, 30th June, 1778: Simms, Correspondence of J. Laurens, 195.

[2] Washington to Congress, 1st July, 1778: Sparks, Writings of Washington, v. 424.

the whole Continental force was so situated as to have been readily concentrated for a general action, with its advanced posts almost touching the enemy's flanks. The British army was encamped in a strong position near Monmouth Court-House, with its right wing extending about a mile and a half beyond the court-house to the junction of the roads leading toward Shrewsbury and Middletown, and its left lying along the road from Allentown to Monmouth, the same that La Fayette had been following the day before, extending about three miles to the southwest of the court-house; its best troops were drawn up in the rear, consisting of the grenadiers, the light infantry, and the chasseurs of the line; each flank was protected by a wood, with a marsh extending toward the rear, and its whole front covered by a wood and for a considerable extent to the left by a morass.

General Washington was convinced, from his knowledge of the country and from the information obtained by him upon the ground, that if the enemy succeeded in reaching the heights of Middletown, some ten or twelve miles beyond their present position, they would be so strongly posted that there would be no hope of a successful enterprise against them. Thereupon he determined to attack them in the rear the moment they should get in motion. He informed General Lee of this intention, and ordered him to prepare for an attack and to keep his troops constantly lying upon their arms to be in readiness at the shortest notice. He took the same measures with the troops composing the main body.

Whilst General Washington was giving these instructions to General Lee, at head-quarters, on the afternoon of the 27th of June, he invited General Wayne, General Maxwell, General Scott, and the Marquis de La Fayette, who were standing near by, to come forward to the place where he was talking, and in their presence he announced that he intended to have the enemy attacked the following

morning by the troops under the command of General Lee, and requested that officer to call his generals together during the afternoon in order to agree upon some concerted plan of action. General Lee assented to this, and promised to meet them at his quarters at five o'clock; after which they separated. General Scott, who appears to have understood the hour appointed to be half-past five, arrived at that time and was told that "General Lee had rode out." General Wayne, however, with General Maxwell and the Marquis de La Fayette, arrived at five and met General Lee. They found his attitude one of complete indifference as to the proposed movement; he held no council with these general officers, he suggested no plan to them, nor did he call upon them for information or for their opinions. He simply informed them that he had nothing to recommend except that they should not dispute as to rank in case he should order forward either the right wing or the left to begin the action; and the conference lasted only a short time, for, as we have seen, it was over when General Scott arrived half an hour later. In the course of the evening General Scott met General Lee, who told him substantially what he had told the others, namely, that he had no orders, but that they were not to dispute about rank.[1]

It is clear that Lee had already determined to thwart the purpose of the Commander-in-Chief, either by preventing an attack the next day upon the British army, or, if an attack were made in spite of him, by causing it to miscarry.

About five o'clock in the morning of the 28th of June, word was received at head-quarters that the enemy had begun to march, whereupon General Washington immediately put his army in motion and sent an aide-de-camp to General Lee directing him to move on and attack them,

[1] Lee's Trial, New York Historical Society: Testimony of General Scott, General Wayne, General Maxwell, and the Marquis de La Fayette.

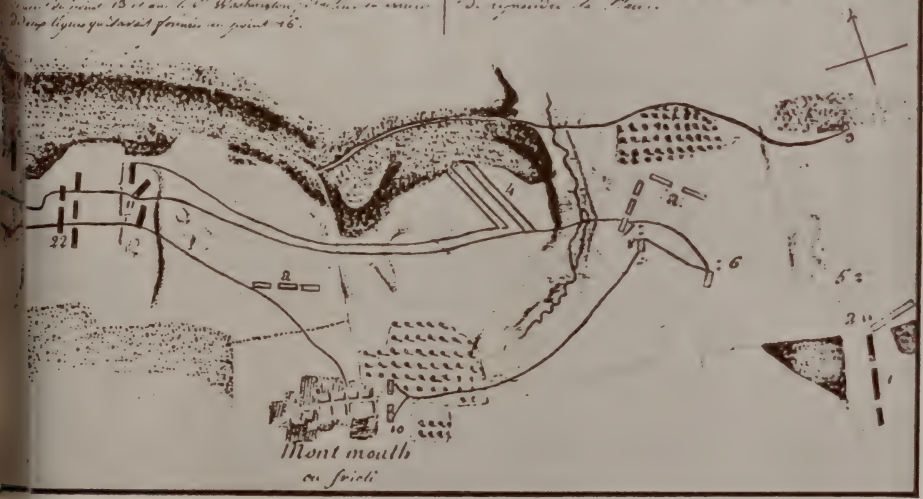
Carte de l'affaire de Monmouth,
ou le Général Washington Commandait
l'armée Américaine, et le
Général Clinton Commandait
l'armée Anglaise.
le 28 Juin 1778.

1 Colonne anglaise se déployant par sa gauche, et dont
il s'est détaché des Dragons pour le poste sur la droi
nos colonnes qui débouchaient du bois.
2 Premier Battoir des Anglais qui faisait feu pendant
qu'ils formaient leur déploiement.
3 Débouchement de la Brigade du Gl Warman et
Colonel Grazin qui s'étaient retirés dans le bois au bas d
Colonnes débouchaient.
4 Débouchement de quatre autres petites Colonnes
du Débouchement du Gl Weins de celui du Gl Scot et
Brigade de Maxwel.
5 Seconde batterie anglaise.

Légende

[illegible] Batterie Américaine.
[illegible] des Américains.
[illegible] fait de la Droite des batteries B et J qui n'ont pu [illegible]
[illegible] leur avoir fait [illegible]
[illegible] Regt de Montmouth [illegible] de la Court House.
[illegible] Regts Hessois en avant de Montmouth pour le Soir. Retrait[illegible]
[illegible] attendre l'ennemie.
[illegible] Position occupée par toutes les troupes de Dal[illegible]
[illegible] Lee en Personne du Soir pour le retraite de Cette
[illegible] on a jetté un Pont sur le Creek de la Gauche.
[illegible] Gal Lee Ses Troupes sur les Troupes jettées à avec le Pont
[illegible] pour la retraite de la Position 11
[illegible] Position occupée par l'Avt Des Troupes, et d'où elles [illegible]
[illegible] Troupes qui [illegible] en Charge le Terrain et [illegible]
[illegible] Defendre Anglais ou le Colonel Stewart avec 2 pieces de Canon
[illegible] passe la Defaite Anglaise qui [illegible] les Troupes.
[illegible] on a debouché en force d'Anglais qui s'est [illegible]
[illegible] des Troupes que [illegible]
[illegible] occupée par les Troupes du même Detachement De Gal Lee en [illegible]
[illegible] Position 13 et au Gal Washington [illegible]
[illegible] Deux lignes qu'elle a formées au point 16.

16 Position que le Gal Washington a fait occuper en se retirant à Freehold
17 Colonne Anglaise qui [illegible] pour attaquer la Gauche Aprés la retraite
[illegible] Troupes étoient déjà à Freehold [illegible]
18 Batteries établies [illegible] Anglais (à Monmouth) [illegible]
[illegible] Colonel Stewart [illegible]
19 Position occupée par le Corps Anglois [illegible]
[illegible] Gal Washington après [illegible]
13 et 18 [illegible] Gal Washington [illegible]
[illegible] Position occupée par les Anglois qui [illegible]
20 Position occupée par les Anglois qui [illegible]
21 Position occupée par le Anglois [illegible]
22 Dernière Position des Anglois, et où ils ont repassé le Pont.
a Le Terrain qui [illegible] les Anglois [illegible]
b Mouvement de la Droite [illegible] Gal Lee [illegible]
[illegible] Gal Lee [illegible]



unless there should be some very powerful reasons to the contrary; he announced to him at the same time that he was then marching to support him, and that in order to do this more readily he had ordered his men to leave their packs and blankets behind.

General Lee accordingly put his troops in motion from the point occupied by him at Englishtown, and advanced in an easterly direction along a road running through a wood about a mile to the north of Monmouth Court-House, and in the direction of the enemy's left flank, who were then retiring from the court-house and moving also in a general easterly direction. General Lee's forces were distributed as follows. In front Colonel Butler, with two hundred men; then Colonel Jackson, with an equal number; Scott's brigade, with a part of Woodford's, six hundred men, with two pieces of artillery; General Varnum's, about the same number, with two pieces of artillery; General Wayne's detachment of a thousand men, with two pieces of artillery; General Scott's detachment, fourteen hundred men, with four pieces of artillery; and General Maxwell's, one thousand men, with two pieces of artillery: in all, some five thousand men, with twelve pieces of artillery, exclusive of the militia.[1] About eight o'clock in the morning, the van, under Colonel Butler, arrived, toward the north and east of Monmouth Court-House, upon the left flank of the enemy, who were then in full march, moving in great haste and confusion. The main body of General Lee's detachment was formed at the edge of the wood, about half a mile distant northward from the court-house. At this point General Lee ordered General Wayne to leave his own troops and to take command of those in front, saying that it was a post of honor, and also that, as the enemy were advancing, he should come forward at once. When General Wayne

[1] General Wayne's Testimony, Lee's Trial.

arrived at the front, in obedience to this order, he found there drawn up about six hundred men of Scott's and Woodford's brigades and of General Varnum's brigade, with two pieces of artillery. Upon the reception of some message from General Dickinson as to the enemy's movements, General Lee ordered a halt to be made here, and shortly afterward he gave the order to advance; but they had not proceeded far before information reached General Lee that the enemy were advancing toward him at a right angle by a road that ran from the court-house in a northerly direction toward the road he was then following in the woods; whereupon he formed some of his men so as to face toward the court-house and to cover the roads in the woods where his troops had advanced and were formed. From there he ordered Colonel Butler with his detachment, and Colonel Jackson with his, to continue toward the front. Colonel Butler formed the advance guard and marched on. The troops then took up the line of march again and followed him until they arrived near the edge of some open ground in view of the court-house, where they discovered a body of the enemy's horse drawn up on the northeast side of the village, between them and the court-house. General Lee immediately ordered a halt, and faced some of his troops about so as to make them front toward this body of horse, though keeping the men well under cover of the woods.

Up to this point, General Lee had carried out the instructions of the Commander-in-Chief, so far, at least, as his actions gave any indication: he had put his troops in motion, he had continued with them and directed their advance, and he had come actually within sight of the enemy. He appears, however, not to have gone beyond this. The moment he had reached the position from which it was intended that he should begin active operations against the British army, and when all the circumstances were propitious to the fulfilment of the plan pre-

pared by the Commander-in-Chief, General Lee stopped. He never directed the attack to be made; he did not order a single gun to be fired. He gave the signal for retreat. General Wayne afterward testified as to this precise moment when the enemy's horse were discovered on the road to the northeast of the court-house:

"General Lee and myself were advancing to reconnoitre the enemy, and had directed the horse and gentlemen with us to remain under cover. In advancing a piece forward General Lee received some message which stopped him.

"I went on to a place where I had a fair prospect from my glass of the enemy. Their horse seemed so much advanced from the foot, that I could hardly perceive the movement of the foot, which induced me to send for Colonel Butler's detachment, and Colonel Jackson's detachment, in order to drive their horse back. I then detached part of Butler's people, who drove the horse into the village, by which means I could perceive the enemy were moving from us in very great disorder and confusion. This intelligence I sent by one of my volunteer aids to General Lee, requesting that the troops might be pushed on."

Shortly after this, General Wayne observed that the enemy had made a halt and appeared to be forming in some order, though they were not in much force as yet, probably six hundred foot and about three hundred horse; he sent to General Lee to inform him of this and to request again that the troops should be pushed on. One of his aides returned with the order that General Wayne should advance with Colonel Butler's detachment and with that of Colonel Jackson, which had been sent forward, about four hundred men together, which he did; whereupon the enemy took up their line of march and moved on. General Wayne crossed the morass about three-quarters of a mile to the east and north of the court-house, at the edge of a road leading to Middletown, near the road the enemy were marching upon,— when the latter halted and fired a field-piece; the main body of General Lee's troops was at that time still ad-

vancing, and had arrived at the edge of the morass somewhat to the northeast of the court-house.

Colonel Butler's detachment being in the van, the enemy advanced with about three hundred horse, supported by about two hundred foot, and, with the purpose of gaining his right flank, made a charge upon him; but Butler met them with so determined a resistance and so well directed a fire that they broke and fell back. This was the only encounter which Lee's troops had with the enemy before the retreat, and in this the advantage was decidedly in favor of the American arms.

General Wayne was looking anxiously now for the expected support in order to follow up the advantage gained; and, believing that it would be sent forward to him at once, he directed Colonel Butler to advance upon the broken column of the enemy. Colonel Butler's force being small, however, he had proceeded only about two hundred yards when the British artillery opened fire upon him with four pieces. In the mean time, General Wayne, who was in the van with Colonel Butler, observed that a force of the enemy, amounting, as he estimated, to some eighteen hundred men, was inclining fast toward his right, apparently with the intention of gaining a piece of high ground nearly in front of the court-house,—the head of their column having halted there and formed, and each detachment forming in succession as it came up. He sent one of his aides immediately to order the rest of his troops then in front of the morass to come forward, while the American artillery began to reply to the British fire from a point about half a mile in the rear of Butler's detachment. To his surprise, his aide came back and reported that the troops had been ordered to repass the marsh in their rear, and that they were retiring over it. General Wayne, at a loss to understand this movement, galloped up to the Marquis de La Fayette—who during this time was serving as a volunteer, under the orders of

General Lee, with the selected troops of the advanced detachment, and was at that moment near Colonel Livingston's and Colonel Stewart's regiments—and asked him what he was going to do with the troops. General de La Fayette replied that he had orders to cross the marsh, and that he should form near the court-house and "from that to the woods." Once more General Wayne hastily sent an aide to General Lee, requesting that the troops might be sent forward to his support; but, as before, word was returned to him that the troops were withdrawing from him, that they had been ordered to retire from the court-house, and that they were now doing so; and almost at the same moment one of General Lee's aides rode up and told him that it was not General Lee's purpose to attack the enemy in front, but that he intended to cut them off and was preparing to throw a detachment upon their left.

General Scott and General Wayne then retired, with their force, across the morass, leaving Colonel Butler still to hold his post upon the enemy's flank; and the two generals rode to the court-house to reconnoitre the ground. From there General Wayne sent Major Fishbourne to General Lee to request that the troops might at least be returned to the position they had last abandoned, which was in a ravine near the court-house, and to say to the general that the number of the enemy did not appear to be more than two thousand men, about a mile distant, in front. This was about an hour after the charge of the enemy's horse had been repelled by Colonel Butler, who still occupied his former position, advanced some three-quarters of a mile to the north and east of the court-house. Major Fishbourne returned and said that General Lee gave no answer, further than that he would see General Wayne himself,—which promise, however, he did not fulfil. In the mean time, to the amazement of both officers and men, none of whom understood what

purpose they were serving or whither they were going, and without its being threatened in any direction by the enemy, the whole advanced detachment of the army was in retreat; although the ground occupied by it had been "the best formed by nature for defence of any, perhaps, in this country."[1]

General Wayne, having failed to obtain support in answer to his repeated demands made of General Lee, was now obliged to send an order to Colonel Butler to fall back, lest in his exposed position he should be surrounded and taken; and, having secured that brave officer, General Wayne and General Scott retired to the court-house, where they formed their troops in an orchard near the village. In spite of the neglect shown by his commander to all his former requests for support, General Wayne sent Major Fishbourne once more, and with him Major Lenox, to beg of General Lee to halt the troops in order to cover General Scott's command; but those officers returned soon after and reported that the troops were then about a mile away and were still retiring, "and they believed there would be no stand yet awhile." General Wayne and General Scott held their ground, however, in the orchard near the court-house, until the head of the enemy's column, which was now advancing upon the retiring Continental forces, had passed through the village and had separated them from the body of their other troops toward the rear, and at length General Wayne, with a very small company of horse which he had with him, sustained a charge from the enemy; after which, from absolute necessity, he fell back, embarrassed, disappointed, and justly angered at this unreasonable failure which he and his fellow-officers had been driven into, in spite of their willingness and their efforts to engage the enemy.

[1] General Wayne and General Scott to General Washington, 30th June, 1778.

The Marquis de La Fayette had marched with the advanced detachment that morning as a volunteer, and had joined himself, at General Lee's request, to the selected troops in the van, at the head of General Wayne's and General Scott's detachments,[1] in the full expectation of coming to action with the British grenadiers as soon as the troops should overtake the enemy's rear-guard.[2] After he had proceeded about a mile from Englishtown in the direction of the British position, General Lee ordered him to halt. Being anxious to engage with his force, he went to General Lee and asked what was the matter. General Lee told him that the reports as to the enemy's movements did not agree, and therefore he was waiting for further information. Shortly afterward, however, La Fayette was ordered to proceed, and then, again, he was directed to halt. His position at this second halt being very ill suited to any manœuvre that circumstances might render it necessary for him to undertake, he sent an aide-de-camp to General Lee to inform him of that fact and to ask that he might be allowed to move on to better ground. His aide reported that General Lee said he would provide for him later, but that for the moment it was of no consequence. Just then the message from General Wayne came back to the main body of the detachment requesting of General Lee that some of the troops might be sent forward, and Colonel Jackson's regiment was pushed up; whereupon La Fayette, who had now arrived at the morass to the northeast of the court-house, and was growing impatient at the delay and fearful that he might lose an opportunity to engage, quickly pointed out a short road by which this regiment might reach the front; and shortly afterward he began to advance again and crossed the morass to its eastern side.

Almost at the same time, one of General Lee's aides

[1] Captain Mercer's Testimony, Lee's Trial.

[2] La Fayette's Testimony: see Appendix C.

said to him that the enemy's rear-guard was sure to be captured, and General Lee himself, who happened to be near by, called out to him, "My dear Marquis, I think those people are ours!" General Lee requested La Fayette to order Colonel Livingston's regiment to file off along the wood, and upon his suggestion that the cannon could not be taken that way, Lee answered that they could go along the road. This was at the time when Colonel Butler's force was engaged with the enemy in the van; and, whilst La Fayette was making every possible effort to proceed toward the front, an order was delivered to him by Lieutenant-Colonel Hamilton from General Lee, directing that, as a detachment of the enemy were gaining his right, he should oppose them by a counter-movement and gain their left.[1] Whilst La Fayette was preparing, with Colonel Livingston, to execute this order, he noticed, to his surprise, that the troops behind him were beginning to retire, and word was brought to him that they had been ordered by General Lee to take post farther back, toward the village of Freehold: he supposed this to have been done because of their exposed position upon the open ground, and as a precaution against having their flank turned. It was whilst this manœuvre was being executed that General Wayne galloped up to La Fayette and asked him what he was going to do with the troops; to which, as we have seen, he replied that they were retiring by command of General Lee, but that he should take

[1] It is important to remember, in this connection, that this order was not an effort on the part of General Lee to check the enemy, but was given at the suggestion of Lieutenant-Colonel Alexander Hamilton, who observed some of the enemy's cavalry filing toward their left, as if to attempt something on the right of General Lee's troops; he informed the general of this and submitted to him whether it would not be proper to send some troops to counteract that manœuvre and turn their left flank; Lee approved of this suggestion, and authorized him to give orders to that effect to a column on the right. Lieutenant-Colonel Hamilton, therefore, gave the order to the Marquis de La Fayette, who was leading that column. (Lieutenant-Colonel Hamilton's Testimony, Lee's Trial.)

up his position near the court-house and "from that to the woods." Thereupon La Fayette went personally to see General Lee in order to learn the purpose of this movement: he found him near the village, directing the troops to fall still farther back; and by that time all the columns were beginning to move in retreat. La Fayette found himself, like all the others who served that day under General Lee, swept along by the irresistible and unaccountable movement which had set in toward the rear. In spite of his most strenuous efforts to reach the front, he had not been able to come into action with the enemy, but was prevented from carrying out the one order which General Lee gave him, to move toward the enemy's left flank, by having been abandoned in an extremely exposed position in the open plain, whilst the troops who should have been sent to support him in this manœuvre were withdrawn at the critical moment and sent to the rear by order of General Lee.[1] With the other officers who were about him, he had the mortification of leaving the field without having been permitted to strike a blow.

General Wayne and General Scott united, two days after the action, in a statement of the case to General Washington, in which they declared to him, "Thus were these several select detachments unaccountably drawn off without being suffered to come to action, although we had the most pleasing prospect, from our numbers and position, of obtaining the most glorious and decisive victory. . . . We have taken the liberty of stating these facts, in order to convince the world that our retreat from the court-house was not occasioned by the want of numbers, position, or wishes of both officers and men to maintain that post. We also beg leave to mention, that no plan of attack was ever communicated to us, or notice of a retreat, until it had

[1] General Foreman's Testimony, and La Fayette's Testimony, Lee's Trial; Mémoires de ma Main, i. 52.

taken place in our rear, as we supposed by General Lee's order."[1]

What happened to General Wayne, to General Scott, and to the Marquis de La Fayette, happened also to General Foreman, General Maxwell, General Varnum, and many other officers serving that day under the command of General Lee. Each found himself executing an order of which he did not understand the purpose, and each was withdrawing his troops when his own judgment and the circumstances which governed the situation of both the British and the Continental army convinced him that he ought rather to advance. Confusion broke out everywhere; no one knew whither he was expected to go, or what position he was to assume after giving up the one he then occupied; no general officer understood precisely whether he was to act by himself or to join with the force of some one else; many of the troops were obliged to retire from the ground they had taken because other troops who should have supported them on the right or on the left were withdrawing and they could not stay behind alone. So, step by step, they were going back over the ground toward Englishtown which they had advanced upon in the morning, with a growing disorder that threatened soon to break through all restraint and to precipitate the army into a headlong flight before the British column, which had instantly seized upon its advantage and was now advancing in pursuit.

It is not pertinent to the present inquiry to examine in detail the various movements of troops which took place, or to describe with military exactness the positions taken up by each detachment, in the action at Monmouth on the morning of the 28th of June. These are fully and precisely set forth in the testimony taken before the court-martial which afterward tried General Charles

[1] Letter of General Wayne and General Scott to General Washington, 30th June, 1778: Sparks, Correspondence of the Revolution, ii. 150.

Lee;[1] though some of the evidence then given may be suitably referred to here, in connection with what has gone before and as bearing upon the general result with which we now have to do.

General Foreman testified that, shortly after the enemy's horse had charged Colonel Butler's detachment, he rode forward to discover the number and the position of the enemy, who he conceived had left their rear-guard at Freehold only to make a demonstration in order to prevent the Continental forces from advancing. From what he saw of them, he judged that their number did not exceed one thousand men; whereupon he rode back and informed General Lee of this, describing to him their position, and adding that he believed them to be considerably in the rear of the column; he also offered to take a detachment along a road which lay to the left, to double their right flank. The only reply that General Lee made to him was, "I know my business." General Foreman observed, at the same time, that General Lee was ordering a body of troops to march into a wood on the left of the column, which troops, he was informed, were a part of those under the Marquis de La Fayette. A short time later, he saw General Lee riding toward the front; he noticed that the Marquis de La Fayette ordered Colonel Livingston's and Colonel Stewart's regiments to march toward the enemy's left, and he was informed by General de La Fayette that he had been directed by General Lee to gain the enemy's left flank. General Foreman further testified that General de La Fayette did not gain the enemy's left flank, because, as he supposed, of the retreat ordered at that time to the village, which retreat he presumed to have been ordered by General Lee, who was present and did not contradict it. The troops then began to form in the rear of the village, with their left extend-

[1] Published by the New York Historical Society, 1873.

ing to a wood to the northward and their right to the southward; but before the line was completed the troops again retreated, and the Marquis de La Fayette told him that this was by order of General Lee.

There appeared by this time much confusion and irregularity among the troops; those upon the left of the village were retreating in line, those upon the right, in column. General Foreman inquired of several officers where they were retreating to. They said, to the woods. But upon asking them, further, which woods, they replied that they could not tell whether it was to the wood in front, or to the right, or to the left. General Foreman was present as they moved across Mr. Ray's field, and he saw General Lee ride up to the retiring troops and order them to retreat with more haste.[1]

Major Fishbourne testified that when General Wayne and he had got within a mile of the court-house the enemy were moving toward Middletown, with a body of horse in their rear. General Wayne ordered Major Fishbourne to go back to General Lee and inform him of this, begging him, at the same time, to forward the troops. He went to General Lee and told him what General Wayne had directed him; to which the general made no reply, but rode toward the troops. Major Fishbourne returned to General Wayne just as Butler's detachment was moving toward the enemy's left flank: the enemy's horse having made a charge upon him, Butler formed his regiment and gave them a volley, upon which they retired. General Wayne then sent him again to General Lee to inform him that the enemy were retreating, and to request him to send forward the troops. When he delivered this message, General Lee said, "Pho! pho! it is impossible!" and asked him who had sent him, but made no further reply; whereupon Major Fishbourne returned to General Wayne.

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[1] General Foreman's Testimony, Lee's Trial.

Colonel Butler's detachment was ordered by General Wayne to file off to the left into a piece of woods, after which General Wayne crossed the morass and met General Scott. They ordered Major Fishbourne and Major Byles to go once more to General Lee, to say to him that the enemy were retreating, and to beg him, for God's sake, to send on the troops. To this message General Lee merely answered that he would see General Wayne himself. Major Fishbourne testified, in answer to a question by the court, that General Lee did not see General Wayne, to his knowledge.

Lieutenant-Colonel Meade testified that he was with General Washington, who, upon hearing the first sound of firing, sent him forward to General Lee to inquire "how matters stood." Whilst he was on his way he met some troops retreating in disorder, their front being a good deal scattered; as he advanced, however, he found much better order, and, falling in with the Marquis de La Fayette, he asked him where General Lee was. The Marquis directed him to a house called Carr's house, where he saw the general. Upon saying to him that General Washington had sent for information as to the situation of matters, General Lee replied that "they were all in confusion." Thereupon Colonel Meade repeated that General Washington would be glad to know the particulars, and that he would communicate immediately, through a young gentleman then present, anything that General Lee might say; to which Lee answered again that the troops were all in confusion, and that he had nothing to say. Colonel Meade further testified that he did not hear General Lee give any orders to his troops whilst he was near him, and that no steps were taken either by him or by any of his officers, during that time, to restore order among the troops; that General Lee was sitting upon his horse and doing nothing.

Lieutenant-Colonel Harrison, of General Washington's suite, testified that he offered his services to General Washington "to go forward and bring him a true account of the situation of matters." After riding a short distance, he came upon a party of Colonel Grayson's regiment, and asked an officer of it, Captain Jones, the cause of the retreat, whether it was general, or whether it was only a particular part of the troops that were coming off, and was answered that "yonder were a great many more troops in the same situation." Continuing upon his errand, he soon after fell in with Colonel William Smith, whom he asked what was the cause of the retreat of the troops, adding that he had come forward to gain information. Colonel Smith answered that he could not tell the cause, but that he had lost only one man. Colonel Harrison continued down the line, determined to go to the rear of the retreating troops, when he met Colonel Ogden, of whom he asked the same question, whether he could give any information as to why the troops were retreating. Colonel Ogden, who appeared to be "exceedingly exasperated," answered, "By God, they are flying from a shadow!" Colonel Harrison next met Lieutenant-Colonel Rhea, of New Jersey, who was leading a regiment, and who replied to his inquiry that he was greatly concerned because he had no place assigned to him where his troops were to halt; he was "very much agitated," and expressed strongly his disapproval of the retreat. And so Colonel Harrison met, successively, as he advanced, General Maxwell, General Scott, Colonel Stewart, and finally General Wayne; the latter of whom gave it as his opinion that it was impossible to tell the cause of the retreat.

In the mean time, General Washington, with the main body of the army, was moving forward, according to the plan he had announced the day before, to support General Lee's detachment as soon as he should receive information that an attack had been made upon the enemy.

He advanced beyond the meeting-house near Monmouth to the junction of the roads, where he halted for a short time to direct the disposition of the army, and ordered the wing under General Greene to go to the right to prevent the enemy from turning the right flank.[1] Upon proceeding again, and having marched about five miles since starting, General Washington was amazed to find the advanced corps coming toward him in retreat.[2] The first information of this that he had was when he met a fifer coming down the road, who appeared to be greatly frightened. General Washington asked him whether he was a soldier of the army, and why he was returning in that manner. The fifer answered that he was a soldier, and that the troops who had been advanced were now retreating. The Commander-in-Chief was so surprised and offended at this reply, which he did not believe, that he ordered the man under arrest and told him he should be flogged if he spread such reports in the army. But, upon his having ridden a few paces farther, he met two or three persons more on the road, of one of whom, who wore a uniform, he inquired where they had come from and whether they belonged to the army; to which he answered that they did, and that the whole advanced corps was retreating. The General could not even then believe what they said, for he could conceive no reason for a retreat, and he had heard no firing except the sound of a few cannon a considerable length of time before. Nevertheless he sent Colonel Harrison ahead, as we have seen, and continued, with the greatest anxiety, to advance. When he had gone beyond the meeting-house nearly to the edge of the morass which afterward divided the hostile armies during the day, he met two regiments retreating, Colonel Grayson's and Colonel Pat-

[1] Colonel Harrison's Testimony, Lee's Trial.

[2] General Washington to Congress, 1st July, 1778: Sparks, Writings of Washington, v. 425.

ton's. The General asked one of the officers whether the whole advanced corps was retreating. He replied that he believed it was; and he had scarcely spoken when the heads of the columns of the advanced corps began to appear. The first officers whom the General met were Colonel Shreve and Lieutenant-Colonel Rhea, at the head of Colonel Shreve's regiment. Greatly alarmed, the General, seeing the advanced troops fall back upon the army without the least notice having been sent to him, asked Colonel Shreve the meaning of the retreat. Colonel Shreve replied, significantly, that he had been ordered to retreat, though he did not say by whom. At the rear of the regiment was Major Howell, who expressed himself with great indignation at the retreat and said he had never seen anything like it.

A moment of intense interest followed almost immediately upon this, when at the head of the next column appeared General Lee himself. General Washington rode up to him, and, with very evident astonishment, demanded, "What is the meaning of this?" To which Lee, in great embarrassment at the General's question, could only reply, "Sir, sir——" Thereupon General Washington repeated it, and Lee answered that his information had been confused, and that he did not choose to attack the British army with troops in such a situation; besides, that the whole undertaking had been contrary to his opinion and advice. General Washington replied that no matter what General Lee's opinion might be, he expected his orders to be obeyed; and with that he left him and rode toward the rear of the retreating troops.[1]

General Washington had ridden only a short distance when he met his aide, Colonel Harrison, returning from the rear, who reported to him that the British army was within fifteen minutes' march of the place where they

[1] Colonel Tilghman's and Dr. McHenry's Testimony, Lee's Trial.

stood, which was the first intimation the General had of their coming on so rapidly. This made immediate action absolutely necessary, and, although he was not acquainted with the country at that particular point, General Washington seized upon a position at a narrow defile with a morass in front of it, as an advantageous one from which to give the enemy the first check; which selection proved extremely fortunate in the action that followed. Calling Lieutenant-Colonel Ramsey and Colonel Stewart to him, he said to those officers that he should rely upon them to check the enemy's advance; whereupon they formed their regiments behind a fence in front of the position, whilst General Wayne, who by this time had come up and who was exceedingly anxious to establish the resistance, began to form the battalions; General Washington observing to him that he would ride back in the mean time and arrange the disposition of the army whilst these troops held the advance against the enemy.

The British cavalry came on in full charge with excellent order to within forty paces, when they were met by a general discharge from the two regiments already formed, which broke them and caused them to fall back. To them succeeded the grenadiers, who now came on to the attack; they were received in the same manner by the advanced battalions, and an exceedingly hot contest ensued, which resulted in great slaughter among the grenadiers.

This check of the enemy in front gave time for the formation of the main army, which General Washington disposed to excellent advantage, with the left wing under the command of Lord Stirling and the second line under the Marquis de La Fayette, upon an eminence and in a wood a little to the rear, covered by a morass in front; on this eminence were placed some batteries which played upon the enemy with great effect, and, seconded by in-

fantry detached for the purpose, effectually put a stop to their advance.[1] General Greene, who had previously been ordered to file off by the new church, two miles from Englishtown, into the Monmouth road, now came upon the ground where the Commander-in-Chief was forming the army, and took an advantageous position, in command of the right wing.

The British troops, thus effectually halted in front, made an effort to turn the left flank of the American position, but were driven back; they also directed their energy against the right wing, but were obliged to retire before the troops of General Greene, whose artillery shattered their ranks and did great damage to those in front of the left wing. The grenadiers returned several times with stubborn determination to the charge, but each time fell back again before a well-directed fire; until, finally, General Wayne advanced with a body of troops who pressed them so severely in front that they were compelled to retire behind the defile where the first stand had been taken at the beginning of the action. The day was by this time drawing to its close, and, when evening came on, the two armies occupied their respective positions upon either side of this defile, the British with both their flanks secured by thick woods and morasses, while their front could be approached only through the pass.

In spite of the strong position of the enemy, however, General Washington determined to attack them; and, with this view, he ordered General Poor with his brigade and the Carolina brigade to move toward their right, and General Woodford to their left, while he stationed his artillery in such a manner as to open upon them in front. The difficulties of carrying out this manœuvre made it impossible to complete it before dark. The Americans remained upon the ground all night, ready to move, as

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[1] Washington to Congress, 1st July, 1778, *ut supra.*

they had been ordered to do, in the morning. But when day broke there was no enemy in sight: the British army had moved off under cover of the darkness.

Sir Henry Clinton's report of the affair stated his retreat to have taken place as follows:[1]

"I made a disposition of attack on the plain, but, before I could advance, the enemy fell back and took a strong position on the heights above Freehold Court-House. The heat of the weather was intense, and our men already suffered from fatigue. But our circumstances obliged us to make a vigorous exertion. The British Grenadiers with their left to the village of Freehold, and the Guards on the right of the Grenadiers, began the attack with such spirit, that the enemy gave way immediately. The second line of the enemy stood the attack, with great obstinacy, but were likewise completely routed. Then they took a third position, with a marshy hollow in front, over which it would have been scarcely possible to have attacked them. However, part of the second line made a movement to the front, occupied some ground on the enemy's left flank, and the light infantry and Queen's Rangers turned their left.

"By this time our men were so overpowered with fatigue that I could press the affair no further; especially as I was confident the end was gained for which the attack had been made. I ordered the light infantry to rejoin me; but a strong detachment of the enemy having possessed themselves of a post which would have annoyed them in their retreat, the 33d Regiment made a movement towards the enemy, which, with a similar one made by the First Grenadiers, immediately dispersed them.

"I took the position from whence the enemy had been first driven, after they had quitted the plain, and having reposed the troops till ten at night, to avoid the excessive heat in the day, I took advantage of the moonlight to rejoin Lieutenant-General Knyphausen, who had advanced to Nut Swamp, near Middletown."

General Washington in his report to Congress says,—

"In the mean time the enemy were employed in removing their wounded, and about twelve o'clock at night marched away in such

[1] Sir Henry Clinton to Lord George Germain, 5th July, 1778.

silence, that, though General Poor lay extremely near them, they effected their retreat without his knowledge. They carried off all their wounded, except four officers and about forty privates, whose wounds were too dangerous to permit their removal.

"The extreme heat of the weather, the fatigue of the men from their march through a deep sandy country, almost entirely destitute of water, and the distance the enemy had gained by marching in the night, made a pursuit impracticable and fruitless. It would have answered no valuable purpose, and would have been fatal to numbers of our men, several of whom died the preceding day with heat."

Sir Henry Clinton marched through New Jersey without further incident and crossed his troops at Sandy Hook; whilst the Continental army proceeded in the direction of the Hudson River.

The conduct of General Washington on the field of Monmouth illustrates in a rare manner his eminent soldierly qualities. When he came suddenly upon the disjointed masses of his advanced troops falling back in disorder and confusion upon the main body of his army, the position was extremely critical; the steady advance of the British grenadiers and of the guards had brought them almost within sight of the flying battalions, and the contagion of this unaccountable retreat threatened to spread in every direction and to produce irreparable damage. Washington controlled the situation instantly. His presence inspired every man with courage; his admirable self-possession called forth an immediate response in the breasts of the soldiers; and his determination not to yield a single step before the enemy changed the course of the battle and saved the army from defeat.

His question to General Lee upon first arriving at the scene of the retreat was one, it is true, of indignation and surprise; but it justly called Lee to account for what had occurred upon his responsibility, it was made with perfect self-control, and its severity of manner was that of a superior who had the right to ask and to know. There

is no evidence of his having expressed violent feeling toward Lee or of his having reproached him with angry words; indeed, the voluminous testimony bearing upon this incident which was subsequently taken at General Lee's trial is remarkably uniform as to the composure of the Commander-in-Chief and the dignity of his attitude throughout.

Having made a disposition of his troops upon the very ground where he met them, which the rapid approach of the enemy rendered necessary, he arrested their retreat with the touch of the master-hand, almost at the moment of disaster.

Those who were near Washington on that day spoke with admiration of the ability he displayed. Alexander Hamilton said[1] that America owed a great deal to General Washington for that day's work; for a general rout, dismay, and disgrace would have attended the whole army in any other hands but his. "By his own good sense and fortitude he turned the fate of the day. . . . I never saw the General to so much advantage." And Lieutenant-Colonel John Laurens, who was then upon the General's staff, wrote to his father, the President of Congress,[2] that his love and esteem for his Commander had been greatly increased by his conduct in this battle, adding, "The merit of restoring the day is due to the General."

That the battle of Monmouth was not a disaster to the American arms was in itself a distinct gain, equal, at that moment, to a victory. But it was even more than this; for, although Sir Henry Clinton claimed the victory in his report to the War Office, which was not unnatural from his stand-point, because each army occupied its ground when night came on, and it was very

[1] Letter to Elias Boudinot, 5th July, 1778.

[2] Letter to Henry Laurens, 2d July, 1778: Simms, Correspondence of John Laurens, p. 200.

necessary at that period of the war for the British commander to send to England the most favorable news he could report within the bounds of reason, yet the British army had unquestionably withdrawn under cover of the night, and that result, in its moral effect throughout America, was tantamount to a victory in the field.

The spirit of the troops was excellent, and they fought with great bravery from the moment that General Washington re-formed them and arrested the backward movement; they obstinately withstood the enemy in the encounter that took place at the narrow defile on the edge of the morass; and their well-directed fire did great injury to the British grenadiers, many of whom fell at this point, among them the Honorable Lieutenant-Colonel Monckton, commander of the second battalion of the grenadiers, a gallant officer, whose loss was greatly lamented in England. His body fell into the hands of the Continental soldiers, by whom it was afterward buried with the honors of war.[1]

The conduct of General Lee appears to have been bad throughout the day, as well after the stand was made as during the retreat which he designed and executed. He did not attempt to redeem himself, either by personal bravery or by his efforts to check the enemy, even after he had been publicly reproved upon the field by the Commander-in-Chief. Whilst General Wayne was assisting to form the battalions, under direction of General Washington, General Lee approached him and asked why he was forming the troops there, under fire of the enemy's cannon and exposed to the enemy's cavalry; to which General Wayne answered that it was by the positive order of General Washington; whereupon General Lee replied that he had nothing more to say.[2]

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[1] John Laurens to Henry Laurens, 2d July, 1778. Lieutenant-Colonel Monckton's grave may still be seen in the little churchyard near Freehold.

[2] General Wayne's Testimony, Lee's Trial.

It is true that, after General Washington had disposed the battalions in front, and when he was about to return to the main body of the army in order to arrange its position to meet the sudden change of circumstances, he turned to General Lee and asked him whether he would resume command; to which Lee replied that he would, and added that he should not be the first man to leave the ground. Whether this declaration arose from a consciousness of shame at a sudden call to duty, or whether he designed it for some purpose of his own, it is impossible to determine. At all events, he did not keep his word.

Colonel Alexander Hamilton says that he was near General Lee for some time afterward, during which he did not hear him direct any measure to be taken to answer that purpose, nor did he see him take any measures himself.[1]

Lieutenant-Colonel Fitzgerald, who was also present at that moment, testified that he saw General Washington ride back to form the main line; also that he was in the advanced position, near General Lee, who appeared serious and thoughtful, but that he heard no orders given, nor did he see him form any plan to check the enemy; he was there when General Lee retired from the field, which was not more than twenty minutes or half an hour later. In the mean time a heavy fire began between the troops formed under Colonel Stewart and Lieutenant-Colonel Ramsey and the advanced troops of the British army, in the skirt of the woods, under which the former were obliged to give way and were closely pressed by the enemy until a detachment under Colonel Livingston came to their relief. At that point Lieutenant-Colonel Fitzgerald returned to the rear of Lord Stirling's line, the left wing of the main army, and he saw General Lee there then.[2]

Dr. McHenry saw General Lee where Lord Stirling's

[1] Colonel Hamilton's Testimony, Lee's Trial.

[2] Lieutenant-Colonel Fitzgerald's Testimony, ibid.

line was formed, a short time after Colonel Stewart and Lieutenant-Colonel Ramsey had given way. He was then saying to General Washington that effects such as happened that day would always be the consequence of a great superiority in cavalry. General Lee retired still farther immediately after this; for Dr. McHenry, who had been sent to the rear to look after the baggage in case the result of the engagement should be unfavorable to the Americans, saw him at Englishtown. He was sitting on his horse, observing to a number of gentlemen who stood about him that it was madness to make attempts against the enemy where they possessed so great a superiority in cavalry, and that, under the circumstances, the Americans could not be successful.[1]

Baron Steuben, who was hastening to the front with reinforcements which he had been ordered to bring up, met General Lee at Englishtown, whereupon Lee asked whither he was going. The Baron told him that he had been ordered forward by the Commander-in-Chief, and that the enemy were retiring in confusion. Upon the word "confusion," General Lee took him up and said that the British were only resting themselves, adding that he was quite sure there was some mistake about those troops having been ordered forward.[2] His evident purpose was, even up to the last moment, to defeat, by every means within his power, any measure that threatened injury to the British force.[3]

For his conduct at the battle of Monmouth, General Lee was tried before a court-martial which was convened at Brunswick, on the 4th of July, under the presidency of Lord Stirling, and which was composed, besides the president, of four brigadier-generals and eight colonels of the Continental army.

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[1] Dr. McHenry's Testimony, Lee's Trial.

[2] Baron Steuben's Testimony, ibid.

[3] See Appendix C.

The charges against General Lee were:

"First: For disobedience of orders, in not attacking the enemy on the 28th of June, agreeable to repeated instructions.

"Secondly: For misbehaviour before the enemy on the same day, by making an *unnecessary, disorderly* and *shameful retreat.*

"Thirdly: For disrespect to the Commander-in-Chief, in two letters dated the 1st of July and the 28th of June."

After an exceedingly patient and thorough inquiry, during which the court met at various places along the line of march of the army to the Hudson River, General Lee was condemned, on the 12th of August, "for disobedience of orders, in not attacking the enemy on the 28th of June, agreeable to repeated instructions; for misbehaviour before the enemy on the 28th of June, by making an unnecessary, and, in some few instances, a disorderly retreat; for disrespect to the Commander-in-Chief, in two letters dated the 1st of July and the 28th of June."

He was sentenced by the court "to be suspended from any command in the armies of the United States of North America, for the term of twelve months."

This sentence was approved by Congress, and was ordered, by a resolution passed on the 5th of December, 1778, to be carried into execution.[1]

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[1] Journals of Congress, 5th December, 1778.

CHAPTER XII.

THE EXPEDITION OF THE COMTE D'ESTAING.

A PERIOD of the American Revolution had now been reached when the presence of the Marquis de La Fayette in this country acquired a different influence from what it had hitherto possessed, and became a matter of much greater importance than it had been before. This was the result of the introduction into the struggle of a new element, by means of which his personality and his individual influence were brought into play in a manner which reflected most honorably upon his devotion to the American cause, and which resulted in lasting and valuable service to the United States. This new element was the armed participation of France in the War of Independence and the actual presence in America of French ships of war and French soldiers.

The arrival of the Comte d'Estaing changed the character of the war in this respect, that it closed the period during which the American people faced their enemies single-handed in the contest for liberty. It brought a strong ally to their assistance upon the sea; it was the forerunner of effective aid on land; and it led to the open avowal, as well as to the considerable enlargement, of that support for which we, as a nation, owe an everlasting debt of gratitude to France. From the moment that the sailing of his fleet for America was known, and that its destination and purpose were placed beyond doubt by the arrival of M. d'Estaing in American waters, the treaty of alliance became fully operative and the interest of the French people was definitively fixed upon the establish-

ment of American Independence. Their national strength was brought to supplement our weakness before the overpowering superiority of Great Britain in wealth and munitions of war; their soldiers and sailors thenceforth saluted, and fought for, the American flag; their prestige as a great people who had now become our allies gave us a new title to recognition among the nations, upon our first introduction to the world.

The critical situation which developed in the affairs of America and France by reason of the succession of misfortunes that met the Comte d'Estaing at every turn, and that ultimately defeated his purposes, during the campaign of the summer of 1778, threatened for a moment to deprive us at the outset of all these advantages, by a misunderstanding between ourselves and our ally. Disappointment, on the one hand, which was all the heavier by reason of the bright hopes that had been suddenly destroyed; the sense of injury, on the other, in the minds of men who felt aggrieved by criticism whilst they were honorably performing their duty as they understood it; differences of opinion, recriminations, traces of suspicion, perhaps of jealousy,—all arising from a combination of circumstances which human foresight could not control,—strained dangerously the relations between two sets of people who, at best, knew one another but very slightly, whose language, customs, and manners were totally different, and whose traditions were not derived from sources of sympathy or kindred.

The failure of the expedition of the Comte d'Estaing at this critical period of the history of the United States was, in every sense, an extraordinary example of ill luck. Fate itself seemed to have entered into the contest against the French admiral, and, with unremitting spite, to have met him step by step, as if to deprive him of his success and cheat him of his glory, to turn him aside from his path, and to compel him at last, worn out by disappoint-

ment, to sail away from our coasts, having accomplished scarcely anything of the purpose for which he had come. And yet, in examining his campaign in the light of his own narrative, as well as in that of such official documents as still remain to us, the one feature which makes itself strikingly evident to the student, aside from the constant recurrence of unavoidable accidents, is the earnest desire of the Comte d'Estaing to be of service to America. But, notwithstanding this, his mishaps involved interests of such serious import to the country at that time, which he had been counted upon, in connection with the Continental army, to foster and improve, that men's minds were inflamed almost to anger; and, among a people who discussed public questions with a freedom of speech which at that time was not common in other parts of the world, the range of criticism came close to the limit of bitterness and brought about a situation which was a source of grave anxiety to all true friends of American liberty. We owe it to the mature wisdom and the soothing influence of General Washington in this time of impending trouble, as well as to the generous personal conduct of the Comte d'Estaing himself, that the crisis was passed without lasting injury; and it was happy for America, at that moment, that it counted among its defenders a man whose devotion to its cause had already won for him the confidence of the nation, and who at this juncture came forward to stay the tide of feeling, to explain misconceptions, to smooth the path that led to unity, and finally to bring about a complete reconciliation: that man was the Marquis de La Fayette.

The negotiations of La Fayette with M. d'Estaing kept open the avenues of communication between the French admiral and the American people; his knowledge of American affairs, and his acquaintance with our national character, enabled him to present the situation in its true light very frequently where otherwise it would have been

misconceived; while, on the other hand, his rank and his position as a French nobleman, a compatriot, and a relative of M. d'Estaing himself, gave him access not only to the admiral but to all the captains and officers of the fleet, such as no other man could then have had. He was for a time the ambassador to whom both parties trusted. His management of the delicate questions submitted to him for solution is marked with such excellent judgment and so much discretion that it is difficult, in following his course, to realize that the person with whom we are dealing was barely twenty-one years of age. His intense love for France is apparent at every step; his desire to avenge her wrongs upon her hereditary enemy, and the thought of her glory, filled his mind with enthusiasm; for this he would willingly have given his life, and he hailed with delighted anticipation the companionship of Frenchmen upon the soil of America. The disappointment which followed fell more heavily upon him, perhaps, than upon any other individual; it left him, at times, almost in despair at the discomfiture of the people whom he loved the best, on the one hand, and at the consequent loss of opportunity entailed upon the country of his adoption, on the other. The expressions of anger which he heard about him in the American camp aroused his patriotism, and he suffered with all the sensitiveness of a Frenchman from the wound inflicted by the least shadow of suspicion cast upon the honor of his countrymen; in a tumult of feeling, he was ready to draw his sword to defend himself and them against criticism, and yet at the same moment, with admirable self-control, he turned to allay, in the interests of peace, the feeling of anger aroused in the minds of his compatriots by similar provocation.

A Frenchman in his views, in his sentiments, and in his aspirations, his position was one of the most difficult conceivable, because it constantly threatened him with a rupture between his natural attachment and his present

allegiance. It is the greatest claim to credit that can be made in his behalf, that throughout this incident La Fayette never for a moment forgot, or failed to defend, the honor and the interests of America.

The expedition which had given rise to these difficult questions in America was the first step taken by the Cabinet of King Louis XVI. toward carrying out, upon the part of France, the treaty of alliance entered into with the Commissioners of the United States on the 6th of February, 1778. The King's assent having been obtained to the commencement of active operations, orders were immediately given for the preparation of a fleet; and within forty-eight hours after the signing of the treaty the chief officer of the squadron had been selected, in the person of Lieutenant-General the Comte d'Estaing, upon whom a letter from the King's hand conferred the title of Vice-Admiral in the Seas of Asia and America and supreme command of the fleet designed to operate against Great Britain in the interests of the United States.[1] This gentleman, who was at that time approaching the age of fifty years, was an officer of the French army, in which his distinguished services, particularly in the wars of India, in connection with which he had twice been a prisoner in England, had given him a high reputation at home for bravery and for ability as a soldier; he had already spent two years in the West Indies during the administration of M. de Choiseul, and had acquired there a considerable familiarity with political questions relating to American affairs. He was especially in favor with the King, whose personal friendship he enjoyed by reason of an attachment which grew out of the relationship of M. d'Estaing to the father of Louis XVI., the late Dauphin, with whom he had been educated and whose companion he had been in his youth.

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[1] Doniol, La Participation de la France, iii. 175–176.

Although he had previously served chiefly on land, he had commanded vessels, but he had never been intrusted with responsibility as a naval officer alone in charge of a fleet; which fact, while there was ample precedent in the French naval history of army officers commanding at sea, gave serious offence in the service and excited hostility toward him among the captains who were ordered to serve under him. This opposition hampered him considerably, no doubt, from the outset; it became apparent at various times during the expedition, and it led to bitter criticism and complaint after he returned to France.

Charles-Henri-Théodat d'Estaing, Comte d'Estaing du Saillans, was, like the Marquis de La Fayette, a native of the province of Auvergne. His family, like that of La Fayette also, was one of the ancient houses of the realm, of long-established power in its native province and of influence among the nobility, by reason of frequent service rendered to the King. He was born in 1729, at the château of Ravel, an old feudal domain, situated upon the road from Thiers to Clermont-Ferrand. His father was the Marquis d'Estaing, Lieutenant-General of the King's armies; his mother was a lady of the house of Colbert de Maulevrier. By connections of intermarriage he was related to the Marquis de La Fayette, with whom, by a strange chance, he was about to play so important a part in the war in America.

Immediately upon his appointment by the King, M. d'Estaing set about preparing his expedition to put to sea. Proceeding to Toulon, he collected his fleet, and in the course of two months was ready to sail, with twelve ships of the line and fourteen frigates, fully manned and equipped, with an additional force of troops at his disposal, consisting of one thousand men.

Besides his military and naval command, he had with him as passengers for America M. Conrad Alexandre

Gérard de Rayneval, the first minister of France to the United States, Mr. Silas Deane, who was returning at the request of Congress, and five or six officers of the American navy, who were to aid the admiral in his approach to the American coast and in his landing. Having hoisted his flag upon the Languedoc, one of the finest vessels of the royal navy, he set sail from Toulon on Monday, the 13th of April, 1778.[1]

As it was important to conceal from the agents of the British Government the departure of M. Gérard, who assumed for this occasion the name of M. de Munster (the King having conferred upon him the title of Comte de Munster, from a fief in Lorraine),[2] and of the American officers, he and they were at first embarked upon a vessel which cleared for Antibes, with the understanding that they should join the fleet when it was off Hyères; and the expedition itself left the port of Toulon with the announcement that it was sailing for Brest. The officers of the different vessels supposed, indeed, that this was true, or that they were proceeding, at least, to a similar destination; for they were under sealed orders which were not to be opened until they had passed the Straits and got under way in the Atlantic Ocean,—no one having been admitted to the secret of the purpose of the expedition but the Comte d'Estaing, M. Gérard, and, as a matter of course, Mr. Deane and the American naval officers.

Adverse winds and storms met the fleet at the commencement of the voyage, hindering it to such a degree that not until the 17th of May, thirty-four days later, was it enabled to make its way out of the Mediterranean, after an incessant contest with its evil fortune, which scarcely ever left it free of impediment from that time forward.

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[1] Conde de Aranda to the Conde de Floridablanca, 17th April, 1778; Espagne, t. 589, No. 31: Doniol, La Participation de la France, iii. 181.

[2] Doniol, iii. 181.

Three days afterward, whilst the fleet was heading to the westward under full sail, the admiral directed signals to be given to his captains, instructing each one to break the seals of the package which contained his orders, and then for the first time the secret which had been perfectly kept was disclosed, that the purpose of the expedition was to take part in the American War of Independence. With great solemnity, the Comte d'Estaing attended a mass celebrated at that moment, in view of the occasion, on board the Languedoc, surrounded by his staff in full uniform, and accompanied by M. Gérard de Rayneval, now presented as the minister of France to the United States, who stood beside the admiral; and a war-vessel, La Flore, which had accompanied the fleet for that purpose, was detached with orders to return to France and carry the news to King Louis XVI.

This was substantially the declaration of war upon the part of France against Great Britain in the interest of the United States of America. And whilst the enthusiasm of the moment spread from ship to ship amid cries of "*Vive le Roi!*" these loyal Frenchmen felt with joy that the moment had arrived when the indignity of a similar declaration against their own country made by England, in the year 1755, was about to be avenged.

To cross the ocean before the British fleet under Admiral Byron could reach America with reinforcements; to blockade the Delaware River and to capture Lord Howe; to destroy the British army in America, and then to repay, in the West Indies, the long list of injuries suffered by France at the hands of her rival, were anticipations of glory which animated every man. The instructions given to the Comte d'Estaing by the King of France directed him, first, to come to anchor in the Delaware River; for which purpose, in view of possible immediate hostilities at that point, a precise description was given him of the British naval armament in America. He had full power

to take whatever measures should appear in his judgment to be necessary or proper according to the attendant circumstances. He was to burn all captured vessels which could not serve to strengthen his fleet, and to disembark all prisoners under promise from the American Government not to release them until the King's assent had been obtained. He was to attack the enemy in any place where he could do them the greatest injury and where he could best advance the interests of the King and the glory of his arms; he was to act alone or in concert with the United States as he might deem best; and his power was enlarged by supplementary orders under which he might attack the English not only in the Delaware but at New York or any other port of North America. He was not to attempt to make any establishment by conquest on the continent of America; though he was at liberty to take possession of some island which might be serviceable to commerce or useful as a fishing-station, such as Newfoundland, acquiring it either by force of arms or by negotiation with the United States. He was to keep himself informed of the hostile projects of the United States, and to assist them if they had any design upon Nova Scotia, though in that event he was to stipulate beforehand for fishing privileges for France and a like concession on behalf of Spain; he should revive as far as possible the ancient attachment of the inhabitants of Nova Scotia for the King of France,—not, however, with a view of establishing the King's authority there, but to aid in securing rights of fishing and to recruit sailors into the French service. In case he should find, upon reaching America, that the British naval force was superior to his own, he was to go to Boston or to one of the French islands for safety. He was to obtain provisions and supplies at Boston, and provisions for six months were to be sent to him from Martinique.

In some respects the most interesting of the items con-

tained in these instructions to the Comte d'Estaing, certainly the most important in our day, from an historical point of view, as bearing upon the intentions of France in the part she took in the American Revolution, is that relating to Canada; because it has not infrequently been asserted that one of the objects which the French Cabinet had in view in aiding this country was the reconquest of that province and the re-establishment of French dominion in America. The Comte d'Estaing was expressly prohibited from taking any part in the conquest of Canada otherwise than by cruising in its waters or making attacks upon British posts. He had authority, however, in case he should be convinced that the United States were about to succeed in taking Canada, to promise, both to the Canadians themselves and to the Indians of that country, the protection of the King of France if they would renounce the supremacy of Great Britain. M. d'Estaing's own language in this connection is as follows: "While I am directed to aid the expedition against Canada, and although I am informed that His Majesty will not hold me strictly to the conduct prescribed in the former instructions, every expression indicates the repugnance of the King toward that enterprise." [1]

The voyage of the fleet was a long, dangerous, and fatiguing one; the vicissitudes of storm and sea were so great, indeed, that it was considered a triumph in itself that the admiral was able to conduct his expedition to America without serious damage to his vessels or loss of men. It was the 7th of July when he finally cast anchor in the Delaware, after having been at sea more than eighty days, since the 13th of April, when he had set sail from Toulon, as we have seen. His first communication with the shore was a disappointment to

[1] "Extraits de mes instructions du 27 mars, 1778," and "Extrait du supplément de mes instructions du 1er avril, 1778," Archives de la Marine, B[4] 143, fol. 9: Doniol, La Participation de la France, iii. 237.

him: it brought the news that the British had evacuated Philadelphia and that their fleet had left the Delaware; therefore that part of his undertaking which related to the blockading of Lord Howe had failed, whereas if he had arrived but a few weeks earlier he might have accomplished his purpose. There remained now nothing to do but to set Mr. Deane and M. Gérard ashore, and, after communicating with Congress and with General Washington as quickly as possible, to make up for the loss of this first opportunity by some action against the British which should be the source at once of gratification to the Americans and of glory to the arms of France. M. d'Estaing hastened, therefore, to announce himself and to declare his readiness to serve the United States, by the following letter, which he addressed on the 8th of July to General Washington:

"Sir,—I have the honor to announce to your Excellency the arrival of the squadron of the King. Charged as I am by His Majesty with the glorious duty of giving to his allies, the United States of America, an emphatic proof of his affection, I shall have attained my greatest happiness if I succeed in this. My pleasure is greatly increased by the good fortune by which I am permitted to act in concert with a general like your Excellency. The talents and the great actions of General Washington have assured for him in the eyes of all Europe the truly sublime title of the Liberator of America.

"I beg you, sir, to accept the homage which every man, which every soldier, owes to you; and permit me, at the outset, with military and naval frankness to solicit a friendship which is so flattering to me as yours. I shall endeavor to prove myself worthy of it by my respectful devotion to your country; this is prescribed for me in my orders, and it accords with the impulses of my heart." [1]

The arrival of the French fleet had been reported to General Washington before he received the admiral's

[1] Archives de la Marine, B[4] 146, fol. 53: Doniol, La Participation de la France, iii. 322.

letter, and he had taken immediate steps to express to him a proper welcome and to supply him with such information as he might naturally require upon first coming to shore in a country with which he was not acquainted. From his head-quarters at Paramus the Commander-in-Chief despatched his aide-de-camp Lieutenant-Colonel Laurens to the Comte d'Estaing with a letter dated the 14th of July,[1] in which, after congratulating him upon his arrival, he informed him that he was then with the main body of the army twenty miles from the North River, which he intended to cross as soon as possible, about fifty miles above New York, after which he purposed to move down upon the enemy's lines in order to give them all the uneasiness in his power. He assured the Comte d'Estaing that he should upon every occasion feel the strongest inclination to facilitate such enterprises as the latter might consider advisable, and added that he might safely confide to Lieutenant-Colonel Laurens any measures or information which he might wish to communicate.

In the mean time M. d'Estaing despatched one of his trusted officers, Major de Choin, with a letter to Congress announcing his readiness to co-operate with the United States. He sent by him also a duplicate of his letter of the 8th of July to be delivered to General Washington, and he recommended M. de Choin to the Commander-in-Chief for the clearness of his intelligence and the precision with which he would be able to convey the ideas of the admiral upon the subject of their co-operation and the continuance of the war.

General Washington replied cordially, upon the receipt of this communication by the hand of Major de Choin, from the camp at Haverstraw Bay, on the 17th of July, to the Comte d'Estaing, as follows:[2]

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[1] Sparks, Writings of Washington, vi. 1.

[2] Ibid., vi. 3.

"Sir,—I had the honor of receiving, the night of the 14th instant, your very obliging and interesting letter of the 13th dated off Sandy Hook, with a duplicate of another dated the 8th at Sea. The arrival of a fleet, belonging to his Most Christian Majesty, on our coast, is an event that makes me truly happy; and permit me to observe, that the pleasure I feel on the occasion is greatly increased by the command being placed in a gentleman of such distinguished talents, experience, and reputation, as the Count d'Estaing. I am fully persuaded, that every possible exertion will be made by you to accomplish the important purposes of your destination; and you may have the firmest reliance, that my most strenuous efforts shall accompany you in any measure, which may be found eligible. I esteem myself highly honored by the desire you express, with a frankness which must always be pleasing, of possessing a place in my friendship. At the same time allow me to assure you, that I shall consider myself particularly happy, if I can but improve the prepossessions you are pleased to entertain in my favor, into a cordial and lasting amity.

"On the first notice of your arrival, and previous to the receipt of your letter, I wrote to you by Lieutenant-Colonel Laurens, one of my aids-de-camp, whom I charged to explain to you such further particulars, as were not contained in my letter, which might be necessary for your information, and to whom it was my wish you should confide your situation, in any measures of concert or cöoperation, which may be thought to advance the common cause. Major Chouin, who arrived this day at my quarters, has given me a very full and satisfactory explanation on this head; and in return I have freely communicated to him my ideas of every matter interesting to our mutual operations. These, I doubt not, he will convey to you, with that perspicuity and intelligence, which he possesses in a manner, that amply justifies the confidence you have reposed in him.

"You would have heard from me sooner in answer to your letter, but I have been waiting for M. de Chouin's arrival to acquaint me with your circumstances and intentions, and, at the same time, I have been employed in collecting information with respect to several particulars, the knowledge of which was essential to the formation of our plans. The difficulty of doing justice by letter to matters of such variety and importance, as those which now engage our deliberations, has induced me to send to you Lieutenant-Colonel Hamilton, another of my aids, in whom I place entire confidence. He will be able to make you perfectly acquainted with my sentiments, and to satisfy any inquiries you

may think proper to propose; and I would wish you to consider the information he delivers as coming from myself.

"Colonel Hamilton is accompanied by Lieutenant-Colonel Fleury, a gentleman of your nation, who has distinguished himself by his zeal and gallantry in the present war with England. He has also with him four captains of vessels, whom I hope you will find very useful, from their knowledge of the coast and harbours, and two persons, who have acted a considerable time in the capacity of pilots, and in whose skill, expertness, and fidelity, from the recommendations I have had, I believe you may place great dependence. I am still endeavouring to provide others of this description, who shall be despatched to you, as fast as they can be found.

"With the most ardent desire for your success, and with the greatest respect and esteem, I have the honor to be, &c."

The Comte d'Estaing, finding that there were no longer any British forces for him to contend with, either in the Delaware River or at Philadelphia, had proceeded to sea again on the 8th of July, and was, at the time he received this letter from General Washington, cruising off Sandy Hook, where he had arrived on the 12th, and awaiting pilots who should conduct his fleet across the bar. His mind was now made up to achieve an immediate success for the French arms and to perform a service which should distinguish their alliance with the United States, by a spirited attack upon New York.

Before leaving the Delaware, the admiral took leave of M. Gérard de Rayneval, the French Envoy, who disembarked as quickly as possible in order to reach Philadelphia to present himself to Congress and to deliver his messages of friendship from the King. Leaving the flag-ship, the Languedoc, on the 8th of July, M. Gérard went aboard one of the French frigates, La Chimère, which was to convey him to Philadelphia; but upon their way up the river they encountered an adverse north wind, which prevented the Chimère from passing the *chevaux-de-frise* which still partially obstructed the channel, and the commander, Captain de Saint-Césaire, set him ashore

at Chester, whence he proceeded to the city by land. News of the arrival of M. Gérard had already been brought to Congress, among the members of which, as well as throughout the city, it aroused the keenest interest; and measures were taken at once to welcome the King's representative and to receive him with the dignity becoming to his station and his mission. Congress sent a deputation of four of its members, at the head of which was John Hancock, to Chester, where they were received upon their arrival aboard the frigate La Chimère with the same honors that had been prescribed by the Comte d'Estaing for M. Gérard himself, and one of the members of Congress delivered an address of welcome; after which M. Gérard accompanied them to the landing and was seated in the carriage of Mr. Hancock, with whom he drove to Philadelphia.

Upon his approach to the city, the troops were drawn up on each side of the streets through which he passed, and salutes were fired by the artillery during his progress. He was escorted to the residence of General Arnold, at that time the commanding officer in the city, and was invited to lodge with him until proper accommodations could be provided for him elsewhere. The reception given him delighted Gérard, who wrote home with enthusiasm of the attentions shown most freely by all classes of the community; and no doubt his reports had an important effect upon the relations between the United States and France. They unquestionably strengthened the alliance, by the assurance they gave of sympathy and cordial friendship, for Gérard declared in his letters to the Comte de Vergennes that the kindness of the American people was so great, even upon the part of "the most phlegmatic" of them, that he could not describe it, for fear of being suspected of exaggeration.[1]

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[1] Etats-Unis, t. 4, No. 19 : Doniol, La Participation de la France, iii. 303.

The Marquis de La Fayette was, at the time of the arrival of the French fleet, with General Washington, who was marching with his main army, in three divisions, of which La Fayette commanded one, through New Jersey toward the Hudson River; and he had arrived at the camp at Paramus, whence they were just about to cross the Hudson, on the 14th of July, the same day upon which the Commander-in-Chief wrote his first letter to the Comte d'Estaing, which was despatched by Lieutenant-Colonel Laurens, as we have seen above.

La Fayette hastened to send a message of welcome to his countrymen, in which he expressed something of the happiness and pride with which his heart was full to overflowing. He wrote, on the 14th, a letter to the Comte d'Estaing, which appears to have been carried by Colonel Laurens, and which has an especial interest from the postscript, added, as he says himself, at the request of General Washington, in which he mentions several circumstances of a personal nature and refers to certain recollections of his home and his family in Auvergne, in order to assure M. d'Estaing of the authenticity of his communication, and to give greater credence to the mission of Lieutenant-Colonel Laurens, as well as a proof of the genuineness of the despatches of the Commander-in-Chief himself. He went even further, to impress the Comte d'Estaing with the genuineness of his letter, and signed it, as he never did any other, with his full name and title: "Gilbert du Motier, M^{s} de Lafayette."

This letter is the beginning of a correspondence between him and the admiral, relating to the successive incidents of the campaign, which extended from the first greeting until the time when the French fleet sailed for the West Indies in October; and although we do not possess the replies written by the Comte d'Estaing, the traces of which are evident, however, from allusions to various subjects that were under discussion between them, these

letters of La Fayette, taken by themselves, are exceedingly interesting from the fact that they are, in relation to much that is contained in them, our only sources of information contemporaneous with the events themselves. As testimony bearing upon the incidents of that period of the Revolution given by one of the principal actors, they have for us the value of historical documents. M. de La Fayette, in writing his memoirs many years after that time, passed too lightly over this part of his narrative, the details of which were probably no longer fresh in his mind, and the reader of his extremely interesting description of the events in which he took part in America must always feel with regret the loss to American history of the fuller account which he might have written, and which he was so well prepared, by his personal experience and his literary attainments, to write, upon his return to France after the war.[1]

La Fayette's first letter to the Comte d'Estaing was as follows:

"At the Camp near Paramus, this 14th of July, 1778.

"I have learned with very great pleasure, Monsieur le Comte, of the arrival of a French fleet upon the coast of America; I have also an equal pleasure in knowing that you command it; and this last gives me promise of another, still greater, which is, to hear the news of a victory more important at this juncture, in my opinion, than any other victory could ever have been. I rejoice to think that you are about to deal the first blow to an insolent nation, because I know that you will rightly value the

[1] This series of letters, numbering twenty-seven in all, of dates succeeding one another from the 14th of July to the 20th of October, 1778, was discovered recently in the Archives of the French Navy, at Paris (Archives de la Marine, B⁴, folios 144 et suivants), by M. Henri Doniol, the distinguished author of the "Histoire de la Participation de la France à l'Etablissement des Etats-Unis d'Amérique," who immediately appreciated their value, and by whom they were published *in extenso*, in the "Revue d'Histoire diplomatique," sixième année, No. 3, in 1892. They appear to have been deposited in the Naval Department by the Comte d'Estaing with the other papers relating to his expedition, and their existence was probably unknown to M. de La Fayette himself, as also to the members of his family who published his "Mémoires, Correspondance et Manuscrits," after his death, in 1837.

pleasure of humiliating it and because you are sufficiently acquainted with it to hate it. I have the honor of being united with you in this sentiment as well as by the ties of kindred and by our common origin as *Auvergnats*, and there is no consideration in the world that is wanting to make me wish for your success with an ardor which it is impossible for me to express. It is of the highest importance at this moment, for more reasons than one, and I trust, Monsieur le Comte, that I shall soon see that feeling toward you renewed and justified which I saw the English honor you with in London.

"The news of your arrival, which I had already heard from New York, was confirmed last evening by a letter to me from the President of Congress. I have just replied to him by a messenger, and I have urged him, as earnestly as possible, not to lose a moment in giving you all the news and all the information that you may be in need of.

"General Washington will do everything within his power to this end, and you will receive a letter from him at the same time with this. You may count upon him as a man devoted to the French alliance, and as the man who, above all others upon this continent, is disgusted with England.

"I shall rely upon him to send you the news that I possess; for we have communicated to each other all the information that each of us had, and I could not add anything more. I have sent certain intelligent people to New York, who are sufficiently in the confidence of the English, and I have promised them large rewards if they will bring me an exact list of all the vessels that have sailed or are about to sail, with any other matter which I think you would be glad to know. If I hear of anything important, I shall not lose a moment in communicating it to you by every possible means.

"You will probably have heard of the evacuation of Philadelphia, of the march of General Clinton across Jersey, of the action in which General Washington won the double advantage of retaining the battle-field itself and of inflicting a much greater loss upon the other side; that march through Jersey must have cost the English, in desertion, in sickness, etc., very nearly two thousand men. As soon as they had embarked I sent word to the Islands upon two different occasions, as M. de Bouillé had requested me to do. You will certainly be informed that the English have shipped all the sailors in their port and have armed all their vessels for action, in order to go out and meet you. They have even printed this in their gazette; and a spy has reported

to me that the companies of grenadiers and chasseurs have received orders to join their regiments, which looks like an intention to embark; he says also that the whole army is instructed to hold itself in readiness. It would be a great pity if they escaped so cheaply; for if you were to defeat their fleet, and if Admiral Keppel were to be stopped on his way here, they would be in an extremely ugly situation. I leave it to the General of the army to inform you of his plans; I shall merely say that we intend to cross the North River and to threaten New York in order to prevent them from stripping themselves of their vessels. The moment that the French flag is seen in the direction of Canada, the half of the inhabitants and the savages will take sides with us.

"If, in talking to you of public affairs, Monsieur le Comte, I were to take up time in mentioning my own matters, I should tell you how embarrassing is my position here; for, however agreeable it is to me to be in America, I have always thought, and I have often said so, and written it, here, I should rather be a soldier serving under the French flag than to be a general officer anywhere else. My purpose is, to leave at once for the Islands, for Europe, even for India, if in any one of these three portions of the world we are going to make war. I do not expect to receive any orders; for I presume there is enough to be done without paying attention to me, but all that I want to know is, whether war has been declared in Europe.

"If I were not in hope that we shall be able to act in conjunction with the fleet, I should go aboard the first vessel I could find and I should ask your permission to follow you in the rear, but as near to you as I could go, that I might be a witness of your success. The army is marching in three divisions; the one which I command will be the last to cross the river, and I hope to be upon the other side the day after to-morrow. I shall have the honor of writing to you from there. The President of Congress has sent me a printed letter, which doubtless has reached you also, but I shall enclose to you a copy of it with mine.

"If I can be of service to you, Monsieur le Comte, command me; the more you give me to do for you the happier you will make me. The opportunity of being useful, even in the smallest matter, to my native land, which is dearer to me every day that I realize its excellence above all other countries, will always give me the greatest happiness, and I shall also feel an especial pleasure in proving to you my desire to assist you.

"I hope you may defeat them, Monsieur le Comte; I hope you

may send them to the bottom, that you may lay them as low now as they have been insolent before. I hope you may now begin the great work of their destruction, which shall place their nation under the feet of our own. I hope you will show them, to their cost, what a Frenchman can do,—a Frenchman and an *Auvergnat!* That you may do them as much injury as they wish to do us, is the sincere wish of him who, craving your pardon for the length of his letter, has the honor to be, with the greatest desire to merit some part in your friendship, and with the most respectful attachment, Monsieur le Comte, your very humble and very obedient servant,

"THE M[IS] DE LAFAYETTE.

"P.S. I have this moment arrived at the head-quarters, Monsieur le Comte, and I learn with extreme pleasure that you are now in a position to embarrass seriously the plans of General Clinton and of Lord Howe. I trust that this will end in a very brilliant manner. General Washington is about to send you Colonel Laurens, his aide-de-camp, to carry his despatches. That is a secret which he has not confided to any one except me, for fear of accident, but he wishes me to send you at the same time some sign by which you will recognize the authenticity of this message. I do not believe that you know my handwriting, but when I refer to our lands in Auvergne, to my château of Chavaniac, to the fine estate of Pont-du-Château and the excellent salmon-fishing that belong to M. de Montboissier; when I mention Madame de Chavaniac and Mlle. du Motier, my aunts, as well as the marriage of my cousin with M. d'Abos; these little family details will enable you to recognize me as a genuine Auvergnat. I wish also that you would soon acquaint us with your handwriting, or with a cipher that will protect us from being caught by some deception. Allow me to present to you Colonel Laurens, a confidential aide-de-camp of General Washington, and the son of the President of Congress. He is a young gentleman of intelligence and of attainments, who has the most ardent love for his country. You will give the General and the Congress great pleasure by receiving him with distinction, *and it will have a good effect in many ways.* You may talk to him confidentially of anything that you may think proper to communicate to General Washington, because it is quite as if you were speaking to the General himself, who intrusts to him his most important secrets.

"Adieu, Monsieur le Comte; here is a long letter indeed. I trust that Colonel Laurens will bring us back the news of some successful movement or the proposition of some plan that gives

promise of brilliant results and in connection with which I may be happy enough at last to shed my blood for my country and to be acknowledged by her.

"I shall end this enormous epistle by signing my name in full,

"GILBERT DU MOTIER, M^S DE LAFAYETTE."

A few days later he wrote to the Comte d'Estaing, in order to present to him, in the same manner, Lieutenant-Colonel Alexander Hamilton, whom General Washington was sending, as we have seen, with his second letter, to the French admiral:[1]

"AT THE HEAD QUARTERS, NEAR KINGS FERRY, 17 July, 1778.

"I have already had the honor of writing to you, Monsieur le Comte, a long letter, of which the greater part was probably tedious, and for which I beg to apologize again. My delight at knowing that you are here, and my desire to assure you of a devotion on my part which I earnestly wish may be useful to you, led me to take up my pen, and General Washington obliged me to add, to a letter that was already too long, a quantity of details which certainly must have made it ridiculous; but he greatly feared that you would doubt the genuineness of his despatches, and, as he knew that I have the honor to belong to your house and to the province in which it originated, he insisted that I should recite my name, my surname, etc., as well as other particular details which not only the English do not know, but with which I am not sure that you are very well acquainted yourself.

"I take the liberty to-day of writing two words to you in order to present to you Colonel Hamilton, aide-de-camp to General Washington, who is intrusted with important despatches and who asked to be introduced to you by me. The proofs of his ability which the General has had, as well as his friendship toward him and his confidence in him, have placed him in a position to know all the circumstances of our present situation; and his own knowledge, added to a quickness of perception which is by no means common, will enable him, I think, to satisfy you in regard to all the information which it is possible to give you. I shall not add any matter of that kind here; it is all contained in the General's letter, or it has been communicated to Mr. Hamilton, who is perhaps the most capable man of the whole army to convey it to you.

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[1] Revue d'Histoire diplomatique, sixième année, No. 3, p. 407.

"Whatever may be the operations that you determine upon, permit me to renew my most ardent wishes for their success, which are inspired not only by the adoration of our native land which proceeds from my heart, and which every man worthy of the honor of being a Frenchman must feel, but also by an especial interest which I take in your glory. It would be the highest degree of pleasure for me if I were permitted to be a witness of this, before the receipt of orders, or the absence of orders, obliged me to join the French standard in another part of the world.

"I have the honor to be, with the most respectful attachment, Monsieur le Comte, your very humble and very obedient servant,

"LAFAYETTE.

"P.S. Monsieur de Chouin, who arrived from Philadelphia this morning, is writing to you at this moment, and I believe his presence is very useful here. Of the different projects that have been suggested to you, that of entering New York, if it is possible, has such immense advantages over the rest that I doubt not you will prefer it, and I am persuaded that *you should ask especially* to be supported either by the whole or by some part of our army at all points where its aid may be of service to you."

Whilst these letters and the despatches were on their way to the Comte d'Estaing by the hands of Colonel Laurens and Colonel Alexander Hamilton, the French fleet was in a situation which was growing more difficult every day. After a voyage which had kept them at sea for three months, the ships were almost out of provisions; the flour that still remained was spoiling, and there was scarcely any water left to drink. The mission of Major de Choin to Congress was largely for the purpose of explaining these necessities and of obtaining fresh supplies, if possible; but, after considerable delay attendant upon his journey, which occupied two days and two nights before he reached Philadelphia, and the loss of two days more before he could see the President of Congress, he was obliged to report that he had met with very meagre success. For, in spite of the cordial willingness of the Congress and of the people of Philadelphia to come to his assistance, the city was almost stripped of every sort

of provision, and the country about it, which had felt the ravages of the war, produced little or nothing. M. Gérard, the French minister, reported that, while it was impossible to make more strenuous efforts in regard to everything that concerned the French fleet than he saw being made in Philadelphia, the resources at hand available for the purpose were almost null. So that the admiral had a double reason in leaving the Delaware,—namely, to meet the enemy and to replenish the water and supplies at Sandy Hook.[1]

He was without pilots who knew the coast, and he had no means of communicating with the shore, which, indeed, was rendered especially difficult by the fact that the British outposts threatened any landing party, while he and all his people were total strangers to the country. As he lay with his fleet outside of Sandy Hook, his anchorage was extremely difficult; he was exposed to the roughness of the sea, which caused his cables to cut very quickly, and he was in danger of being driven upon the shore at any moment if a gale were to overtake him in that position. In the mean time, whilst his officers and men were patiently enduring their hardships in the hope that each succeeding day would bring them the opportunity they sought of engaging with the common enemy for the liberties of America and for the glory of France, they were perfectly helpless unless they could co-operate with the Continental army in the development of a plan of campaign which might be agreed upon; and it had now become an absolute necessity to obtain in some manner a means of communication with Congress and with General Washington. In the face of the difficulties and dangers by which he was surrounded, the personal conduct of the admiral upon this occasion is of more than common inter-

[1] D'Estaing's Official Report to the Secretary of the French Navy, Archives de la Marine, B^4 141, folios 227 et suiv.: Doniol, La Participation de la France, iii. 447.

est as an historical incident in connection with his unfortunate expedition to America, for which he has been freely criticised and found fault with at home and abroad, because what followed affords us one of those rare glimpses into the merits of human action which of themselves go far toward reflecting the character of men, and proves beyond doubt, if other proof were lacking, that M. d'Estaing was an earnest soldier and a man of courage. He announced that, as he was unwilling to expose any man under his command to dangers that he was not ready to share, and in view of the critical situation of the fleet, he had determined to go ashore himself. Setting out, therefore, in a row-boat with a small force of soldiers and sailors, who accompanied him in boats, he made his way through extremely rough water to the Shrewsbury River, the entrance to which he discovered after great difficulty and at the cost of the lives of one of his officers and a number of sailors and the destruction of several boats.

As a result of this effort, he was fortunate enough to meet with Lieutenant-Colonel Laurens, who bore with him the letters of General Washington and of the Marquis de La Fayette, and from whom he obtained, to his great relief, the information he sought as to the General's plans of operation, with the welcome news that measures were then being carried out to furnish him with water and provisions, as well as with pilots to conduct his ships into New York harbor. Shortly afterward, Colonel Alexander Hamilton arrived with further letters from headquarters, and united with Colonel Laurens with unremitting industry to further the interests of the fleet and to collect suitable pilots for the ships. A small quantity of fresh water was conveyed aboard, in spite of the difficulty of transportation, and a supply of provisions sufficient to prevent absolute want among the crews, who were now suffering, in the midst of their other difficulties, with the scurvy, which had broken out virulently among them.

The most serious want at the moment was that of pilots who knew the channel: many who had been employed by the British refused their services, and nearly all who could be found near New York were so disaffected that they had no desire to aid the French admiral. The Marquis de La Fayette succeeded at last in inducing one of them who had brought Lord Howe's vessels into port to consent to act, though greatly against his will and not until La Fayette had promised to send him in a carriage, on account of an illness which he probably exaggerated in order to escape this duty.[1] La Fayette wrote to the Comte d'Estaing, from King's Ferry, on the 18th of July, and sent his aide-de-camp, Mr. Nevill, to carry the letter and to announce to the admiral the coming of this pilot.[2]

Thus, while the President of Congress, the Commander-in-Chief, the Marquis de La Fayette, Colonel Hamilton, Colonel Laurens, and very many others loyal to the American cause, were employing every possible means to unite the Continental forces and those of our allies, communication was established, plans were agreed upon, and the prospect of victory grew bright. The Comte d'Estaing's fleet was greatly superior in armament, and in the number of men it carried, to that of the British admiral. It was ready for immediate action, M. d'Estaing's theory of naval warfare being that the advantage would be gained by a sudden appearance before the place to be attacked and by a rapid stroke which should allow no time for preparing defence; and the great French men-of-war lay just outside of New York harbor, where the English flag could plainly be seen floating from the masts of hundreds of vessels of various kinds.

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[1] Major de Choin wrote to the admiral that, "with the best countenance in the world, he refuses to go aboard of you, under pretext of a fever, which I wish I had in his place, if it be true that he has it."

[2] La Fayette to the Comte d'Estaing, 18 July, Revue d'Histoire diplomatique, *ut supra*, p. 407.

For one moment the case of the British in America seemed desperate; but the next instant the Comte d'Estaing's ill luck intervened to respite them from impending evil. It was the unanimous decision of the pilots that the larger of the French ships drew too much water to admit of their being taken across the bar; and, however unwelcome this news was to the French captains, it was found, to their intense disappointment, that it was true. The Comte d'Estaing, unwilling to admit the possibility of a reverse so absolutely destructive of all his hopes, after having offered fifty thousand French écus to any pilot who should take them over, made the soundings of the channel himself, and was forced to admit that he must abandon the attempt.[1] His heavy ships of seventy-four, like the Languedoc, drew two or three feet more than the English men-of-war of the same class, which, he was assured by the pilots, never crossed the bar without removing some of their guns; and of course he could not afford to do that in the face of an enemy. Therefore, after having lain for eleven days at the entrance to the harbor, he reluctantly admitted that he could not hope to win a victory at New York; and, with the sad reflection that "it is terrible to be within sight of your object and yet to be unable to attain it," he weighed anchor and once more put to sea. In addition to the dangers which made his position off Sandy Hook untenable was the news which Congress sent an American vessel to

[1] "Les marées des mortes eaux que la cartte de la de la War spécifie, tandis que celle de la rivière d'Hudson se tait sur cet objet important, ne sont que de quatre pieds et demi anglais qui vallent 4 pieds 2 pouces 9 lignes français. Ce total ne donnerait donc à la mer hautte qu 23 pieds 11 pouces. Le tirant d'eau du *Languedoc* est de 22 pieds six pouces; celui du *Tonnant* est de 23 pieds 10 pouces, et tous les vaisseaux de 74 de l'escadre tirent de 21 à 22 pieds d'eau; eux seuls peuvent avoir quelleque supériorité sur le nombre des vaisseaux de 64 et de cinquante qu'ont les Anglais."—Correspondence between the Comte d'Estaing and M. Gérard, on board the Languedoc, at Sea, 22d June, 1778; Archives de la Marine, B^4 143, fol. 12: Doniol, La Participation de la France, iii. 243.

convey to him, and which reached him there, of the sailing from England of the strong British armament under Admiral Byron, who might be expected very shortly to arrive, and if this force were united with that of Lord Howe the two would present so formidable an array that M. d'Estaing could not hope to compete with them.

The plan which General Washington proposed in the event of failure at New York—which he appears to have anticipated from the reports he had received as to the impediment likely to be presented to the larger French ships of the line by the shallow water on the bar—was an attack upon Newport, where the British had established a garrison of six thousand men, with several vessels in the harbor. The capture of this point in co-operation with the land forces of the United States, whilst General Washington, from his position at White Plains, should threaten Sir Henry Clinton and prevent him from exposing New York by sending reinforcements, and the destruction of the British frigates anchored at Newport, would have been an achievement of which the allies might well feel proud, and would have been a serious blow to British supremacy in America. M. d'Estaing announced to General Washington through Colonel Hamilton, whom he had detained until a definite conclusion should be reached, that he should now prepare for the attack upon Newport, an operation which had the double advantage of bringing his forces into direct communication with those of the American army and of according exactly with the tenor of the instructions which he had brought with him from France. He sailed from Sandy Hook on the 23d of July, just as the indications of an approaching storm would have obliged him to weigh anchor in any event; and on the 29th of the month he arrived before Rhode Island with his fleet drawn up in order of battle ready to force a passage into Newport, and came to anchor outside of Brenton's Ledge, five

miles below the town. Upon the receipt by General Washington of the letter which M. d'Estaing had sent him by the hand of Colonel Alexander Hamilton, from the Languedoc, before leaving Sandy Hook, he wrote to the admiral as follows:[1]

"HEAD QUARTERS, 22 July, 1778.

"SIR,—I this moment received the letter, which you did me the honor of writing by Lieutenant-Colonel Hamilton. I cannot forbear regretting that the brilliant enterprise, which you at first meditated, was frustrated by physical impossibilities; but I hope that something equally worthy of the greatness of your sentiments is still in reserve for you. Upon the report made to me by Lieutenant-Colonel Laurens, of the depth of water at Sandy Hook, and the draught of your ships of the line, I thought that no time was to be lost in marching a reinforcement to General Sullivan, that he might be in a situation for a vigorous coöperation. I am happy to find, that we coincided so exactly in the importance of this expedition.

"Mr. Laurens, who will have the honor of delivering you this, will inform you of my opinion relative to the stationing of a ship of the line in the Sound, as well as of other particulars, which I have communicated to him. I shall not therefore employ your attention farther than to assure you, that you have inspired me with the same sentiments for you, which you are so good as to entertain for me, and that it will be my greatest happiness to contribute to the service of our great ally in pursuing our common enemy, and to the glory of an officer, who has on every account so just a claim to it, as the Count d'Estaing."

The Commander-in-Chief had sent orders to General Sullivan, who at this time commanded in Rhode Island, directing him to apply, in the most urgent manner, to the States of Rhode Island, Massachusetts, and Connecticut, to make up a body of five thousand men, inclusive of those he already had with him, in order to be ready at all points and for all events; also to establish suitable magazines of provisions and to collect proper boats for a descent.

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[1] Sparks, Writings of Washington, vi. 12.

He also determined to send forward as a reinforcement to General Sullivan such a part of his Continental troops as he could reasonably spare without weakening too greatly his own position, and to intrust the command of it to the Marquis de La Fayette. Accordingly he issued to La Fayette the following order :[1]

"WHITE PLAINS, 22 July, 1778.

"SIR,—You are to have the immediate command of that detachment from this army, which consists of Glover's and Varnum's brigades, and the detachment under the command of Colonel Henry Jackson. You are to march them, with all convenient expedition and by the best routes, to Providence in the State of Rhode Island. When there, you are to subject yourself to the orders of Major-General Sullivan, who will have the command of the expedition against Newport, and the British and other troops in their pay on that and the islands adjacent.

"If on your march you should receive certain intelligence of the evacuation of Rhode Island by the enemy, you are immediately to countermarch for this place, giving me the earliest advice thereof. Having the most perfect reliance on your activity and zeal, and wishing you all the success, honor, and glory, that your heart can wish, I am, with the most perfect regard, yours, &c."

It is very likely that La Fayette had solicited this command, or, at least, that he had sought from the Commander-in-Chief an opportunity to serve with whatever detachment of the army should be sent to co-operate with the French troops, although our documents do not prove this. At all events, he eagerly accepted the command now offered him, and, exhilarated by the prospect of the glorious results which appeared to be but a little way off, he started with his men for Providence,—his only source of discomfort being the fear that he might arrive too late for the action. Just before setting out, he wrote the following letter to the Comte d'Estaing :[2]

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[1] Sparks, Writings of Washington, vi. 8.

[2] Revue d'Histoire diplomatique, *ut supra*, p. 407.

"At the Head Quarters, 22 July.

"I have this moment received, Monsieur le Comte, the letter that you have done me the honor to write to me by Mr. Nevill. Colonel Hamilton has not yet arrived. The kindness you have shown to me inspires me with an earnest desire to merit your esteem and some part also of your friendship. You have used expressions of compliment toward me which, even after making the proper deductions on behalf of your politeness, are still ten thousand times too great for my slender deserts. But, at the risk of sinking in your estimation after you have come to know me more fully, my feelings toward you so far control my self-esteem that I am delighted at the hope of seeing you soon and of fighting under your eye.

"Mr. Laurens will tell you where I am going and what I am doing, and your Frenchman's heart will feel how happy I am. I am leaving my detachment at White Plains with very sincere pleasure, to command the detachment of which you will hear. You have filled me with joy, Monsieur le Comte, by holding out to me the flattering hope that I shall go into action with the infantry that you have on board. I have never heard any news since I came into the world that gave me greater pleasure. I am setting out with this flattering anticipation; and I am most anxious to deserve the friendship and esteem of our gallant and beloved countrymen. I have never before realized the charm of our profession, Monsieur le Comte, as I do now that I am to be allowed to practise it in company with Frenchmen. I have never wished so much for the ability that I have not, or for the experience that I shall obtain in the next twenty years, if God spares my life and allows us to have war. No doubt it is amusing to you to see me presented as a general officer; I confess that I am forced myself to smile sometimes at the idea, even in this country, where people do not smile so readily as we do at home.

"I beg you, in the name of your own love of glory, do not begin the operations before we arrive; I shall hasten the march of my troops as much as possible. I am bound to stay with them, otherwise I should precede Mr. Laurens. This reinforcement will go far toward assuring our success, as you will see by the account that is to be given to you. I declare that if I were to arrive too late I should want to go and hang myself.

"Adieu, Monsieur le Comte. I am very much hurried; I am not given time enough to finish my scribbling, still less to write in cipher; for General Washington is anxious to see his aide de-camp set out. The last words in your letter are entirely in accord

with my wishes, and I have an idea upon this subject which I shall humbly ask your permission to submit when we are able to see each other.

"I love you tenderly, Monsieur le Comte; you are the man whom I should have asked for at the head of this fleet, and the man who satisfies my heart; though this does not prevent me from entertaining the consideration and respect for you which I owe you for so many reasons. In the mean time, as a result of this respect and of the honor and gratification it is to me to obey you, I shall conclude by assuring you simply of my very sincere attachment and of my very sincere wishes for success and for the glory of the French name."

Two days later, when he was upon his march toward Providence, he wrote again to M. d'Estaing a letter which he sent by Mr. Nevill:[1]

"At Stampfort, 16 miles from White Plains,
"24 July, 1778, at noon.

"This letter is intrusted, Monsieur le Comte, to the same messenger who, uniting to his ordinary zeal the strongest gratitude for the kindness you have done him the honor to show him, will not delay in handing it to you. You have received one by the hand of Mr. Laurens, written in haste, in which I informed you of all the happiness I am anticipating, and of the flattering prospects which will support me during my journey, provided that you consider our detachment worth being waited for, which I hope most earnestly. I have the honor to enclose to you herewith a letter which was sent to me last night by your correspondent.

"I was detained for two days at the head-quarters waiting for Mr. Hamilton, and, as he may have been delayed by some accident, I decided to start before his coming, in order not to retard my own arrival and that of my companions at the destination where I am burning to be. I was unable to take leave of General Washington until very late yesterday. The troops are thirty miles beyond this place, in advance of me, and I am going to join them in order to hasten them. I have written to the officer in command at the place where Mr. Nevill is going, to ask him to use every means to enable him to reach you; he will return and bring me word from you, unless you have other orders for him. The subject about which I have spoken to you in my first ciphers

[1] Revue d'Histoire diplomatique, *ut supra*, p. 409.

causes me the greatest solicitude, and I confess to you that I shall not have a moment's peace until he comes back to reassure me. I have proposed to General Sullivan that, if he is in a hurry, I shall join him with the most active men from the different regiments.

"Mr. de Chouin will certainly have informed you that some vessels were seen two days ago which alarmed us upon certain accounts that you will readily understand; but we have heard nothing further, and we hope that these gentlemen are too much occupied to think of everything. I flatter myself that in a very few days I shall be at the end of my journey.

"The more I think of the word you have sent me, Monsieur le Comte, the happier I am. I have expressed to M. de Chouin an idea which he believes to be in accord with what he knows to be your purpose, and I am extremely proud. I promise you to use the greatest discretion toward both the Americans and the Frenchmen; it is a measure much more necessary here than anywhere else, for very many reasons.

"Adieu, Monsieur le Comte. I trust I may soon hear from you and receive a confirmation of the flattering hopes of which my heart is full. Why can I not march as fast as my thoughts, or at least as fast as you can go into action and win the victory? I shall have the honor of writing to you again within two or three days. Nothing has assured me of your kindness toward me, I make bold to say, of your friendship, so much as the amusing criticisms that you make of my talents as a general. I have no greater ambition, Monsieur le Comte, than to appear to you worthy of being a French soldier and of serving as such under your orders.

"As obedience and respect are two of the three forms of homage which my heart loves to present to you, I shall content myself here with offering you my warm attachment.

"LAFAYETTE.

"I beg you to excuse the awkwardness and the bad construction of my ciphers; I am very new at this business, and I fear I have made them as unintelligible to you as they would be to Mylord Howe.

"I saw a gentleman yesterday who had seen another who told him that he had seen a French vessel which had come to Boston in thirty-six days, by which he had learned that Admiral Keppell had been to inspect the English fleet which it was intended to assign to him, and that he had found it in so bad a condition, both as to the vessels themselves and as to the class of sailors who were on board, that he had refused the command."

In the mean time, General Washington had decided, upon reflection, after La Fayette had set out with his detachment, that the operation would be strengthened and its chances of success increased if Major-General Greene were assigned to take part in it, not only because of his confidence in that officer's devotion and skill, and of the close friendship that existed between him and the Commander-in-Chief, but also because Greene was a native of Rhode Island and his familiarity with its situation and its resources would be of very great service. General Greene himself was extremely anxious to take part in this expedition now about to be made almost within sight of his home, which he had not seen for more than three years, having been for that time in constant active service with the Continental army; and while his duties as Quartermaster-General would be likely to bring him into close connection with the operations, he was not satisfied with merely that share in the promised success, but desired to be present in his capacity also of a commanding officer.[1]

General Washington acceded to General Greene's wish, therefore; but, as there were no troops who could properly be spared from the ranks of the main army for this purpose, the only way by which this could be accomplished was to give him command of part of the troops already detached for service in Rhode Island, dividing the command which had been assigned to the Marquis de La Fayette. The Commander-in-Chief wrote accordingly to La Fayette to announce to him this disposition of the forces, in an interesting letter which strikingly illustrates the tender consideration which Washington always entertained for the feelings of the younger man. This letter, which was carried by General Greene, was as follows:[2]

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[1] Greene's Life of Greene, vol. ii. chap. iii.

[2] Sparks, Writings of Washington, vi. 22.

"HEAD QUARTERS, WHITE PLAINS,
"27 July, 1778.

"DEAR MARQUIS,—

"This will be delivered to you by Major-General Greene, whose thorough knowledge of Rhode Island, of which he is a native, and the influence he will have with the people, put it in his power to be particularly useful in the expedition against that place; as well in providing necessaries for carrying it on, as in assisting to form and execute a plan of operations proper for the occasion. The honor and the interest of the common cause are so deeply concerned in the success of this enterprise, that it appears to me of the greatest importance to omit no step, which may conduce to it; and General Greene on several accounts will be able to render very essential services.

"These considerations have determined me to send him on the expedition, in which, as he could not with propriety act nor be equally useful merely in his official capacity of quartermaster-general, I have concluded to give him a command in the troops to be employed in the descent. I have therefore directed General Sullivan to throw all the American troops, both Continental, State, and militia, into two divisions, making an equal distribution of each, to be under the immediate command of General Greene and yourself. The Continental troops being divided in this manner with the militia, will serve to give them confidence, and probably make them act better than they would alone. Though this arrangement will diminish the number of Continental troops under you, yet this diminution will be more than compensated by the addition of militia; and I persuade myself your command will not be less agreeable, or less honorable, from this change in the disposition. I am, with great esteem and affection, dear Marquis, your most obedient servant."

The spirit in which the Marquis de La Fayette received this announcement does great honor to his character. It came to him when his most sensitive feelings were engaged in his command. We have witnessed the delight with which he approached the French admiral, and the enthusiasm with which he looked forward to the occasion when he should act in concert with his countrymen under the standard of his King; we realize very easily the pride with which he was about to present

himself to the admiral as an officer of the American army intrusted with the detachment sent to co-operate with him, the young soldier of Metz who had left his country but a short time previously in danger of censure for a step which the Government discountenanced and which his nearest and best counsellors disapproved of, now a major-general, with honor and recognized position in the country whose cause he had adopted, and sent in a certain sense as a representative of the United States to meet the allied troops of France. This was a situation in which it was not agreeable to him to share his glory with another. Yet he replied to General Washington with a graceful acquiescence to his wishes, in a letter dated at Providence on the 6th of August, 1778:[1]

"Dear General,—I have received your excellency's favour by General Greene, and have been much pleased with the arrival of a gentleman who, not only on account of his merit, and the justness of his views, but also by his knowledge of the country and his popularity in this State, may be very serviceable to the expedition. I willingly part with the half of my detachment, though I had a great dependence upon them, as you find it convenient to the good of the service. Anything, my dear General, you will order, or even wish, shall always be infinitely agreeable to me, and I will always feel happy in doing anything which may please you, or forward the public good. I am of the same opinion as your excellency, that dividing our continental troops among the militia, will have a better effect than if we were to keep them together in one wing.

"You will receive, by General Sullivan, an account of his dispositions, preparations, &c.; I, therefore, have nothing to add, but that I have been on board of the Admiral the day before yesterday. I saw among the fleet an ardour and a desire of doing something, which would soon turn into impatience, if we don't give them a speedy occasion of fighting. The officers cannot contain their soldiers and sailors, who are complaining that they have been these four months running after the British, without getting at them; but I hope they will soon be satisfied.

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[1] La Fayette's Correspondence, American edition, i. 183.

"The Count d'Estaing was very glad of my arrival, as he could open freely his mind to me. He expressed the greatest anxiety on account of his wants of every kind, provisions, water, &c.; he hopes the taking of Rhode Island will enable him to get some of the two above-mentioned articles. The admiral wants me to join the French troops to these I command, as soon as possible. I confess I feel very happy to think of my co-operating with them, and, had I contrived in my mind an agreeable dream, I could not have wished a more pleasing event than my joining my countrymen with my brothers of America, under my command, and the same standards. When I left Europe, I was very far from hoping such an agreeable turn of our business in the American glorious revolution.

"Though I have no account, neither observations, to give your excellency, as I am here *a man of war of the third rate*, I will, after the expedition, scribble some lines to you, and join to the account of General Sullivan, the assurance that I have all my limbs, and that I am, with the most tender affection, and entire confidence, yours, with high respect,

"LAFAYETTE."

This letter gave very great pleasure to General Washington: it enabled him to gratify the desire of General Greene, whose wish for a command in Rhode Island was paramount, by reason of his years of service in the army, his seniority as a major-general, and his character as a man and a soldier whom Washington loved and respected; and it brought him the assurance of the cheerful obedience upon the part of La Fayette to which their relations entitled him, and which he hoped for, even under circumstances which he knew to be trying to a man of so sensitive a nature. He wrote to him, immediately upon the receipt of it, from White Plains, on the 10th of August, as follows:[1]

"MY DEAR MARQUIS,—Your favor of the 6th instant, which came to my hands yesterday, afforded a fresh proof of the noble principles on which you act, and has a just claim to my sincere

[1] Sparks, Writings of Washington, vi. 27.

and hearty thanks. The common cause, of which you have been a zealous supporter, would, I knew, be benefited by General Greene's presence at Rhode Island, as he is a native of that State, has an interest with the people, and a thorough knowledge of the country; and therefore I accepted his proffered services; but I was a little uneasy, lest you should conceive that it was intended to lessen your command. General Greene did not incline to act in a detached part of the army, merely as quartermaster-general; nor was it to be expected. It became necessary, therefore, to give him a detached command, and consequently to divide the Continental troops. Your cheerful acquiescence in the measure, after being appointed to the command of the brigades which marched from this army, obviated every difficulty, and gave me singular pleasure.

"I am very happy to find, that the standards of France and America are likely to be united under your command at Rhode Island. I am persuaded, that the supporters of each will be emulous to acquire honor, and promote your glory upon this occasion. The courier to Count d'Estaing is waiting. I have only time therefore to assure you, that with the most perfect esteem and exalted regard I have the honor to be, my dear Marquis, your obedient and affectionate servant."

CHAPTER XIII.

OPERATIONS OF THE ALLIED FORCES AT NEWPORT.

After a rapid march of two hundred and forty miles, during which his anxiety to arrive led him to neglect no means of hastening his footsteps, La Fayette reached Providence, with his detachment of two thousand men, on the 4th of August. He found the fleet there, as he had expected, and he learned that every possible effort was being made in Rhode Island and in the other New England States to assemble the militia, but that, up to that time, General Sullivan had but a comparatively small part of the ten thousand men whom he had expected for his share in the operation at Newport, and that, as it was his plan that the fleet and the army should act together, another unfortunate delay must occur, although the Comte d'Estaing was quite ready to move to the attack as soon as he should be informed that it was the desire of the American commander to have him do so. The French officers, who earnestly wished to act at once, were exceedingly disappointed at this new obstacle in the way of their success; their impatience was increased by the sufferings aboard the ships, where the scurvy was carrying off very considerable numbers of men, and the lack of fresh water and provisions terribly reduced the strength of the crews. Soon after the fleet came to anchor, General Sullivan went aboard the flag-ship, and, after explaining his position to the admiral, asked for more time in which to make his preparations for the attack.[1]

[1] Comte d'Estaing to General Washington, 3d August, 1778; Archives de la Marine, B^4 146, fol. 57: Doniol, La Participation de la France, iii. 370.

The Comte d'Estaing concealed under a polite acquiescence to this request the disappointment he felt at the discovery that the army with which he had come to cooperate "was still at home,"[1] or that at least the greater part of it had not yet come into the field. He consented, however, to wait, with a determination always to conform to the expressed wishes of the American general, at whatever cost to himself and his men, in order to perform his duty toward the allies of the King; and he replied to General Sullivan that he understood the uncertainties of war sufficiently well to know that soldiers and sailors must be ready to meet any circumstances that might arise, and that, whether the expected armament should arrive from England, or not, to strengthen the enemy, he should continue to do everything in his power to serve the common cause. But he reminded General Sullivan at the same time, with a courteous insistence upon the necessity of action, that every additional day passed by the fleet in idleness was that much less damage to the enemy; the truth of which was shown by the subsequent discovery that this delay had given them an opportunity to prepare very important measures for defence which materially changed their attitude when the action finally took place.

The whole British garrison consisted of six thousand men, under the command of Major-General Pigot, the main body of which was intrenched in Newport itself, with a small detachment stationed at the extreme northern end of the island, in some works which had been thrown up to prevent a descent from the adjacent mainland; and three regiments, aggregating fifteen hundred men, were posted upon Canonicut Island, immediately to the west. The defences upon the island to the north of Newport were composed of two lines of outworks, supported by several redoubts connected with the lines. The first of

[1] Comte d'Estaing's Report to the Secretary of the French Navy, *ubi supra.*

these lines extended from Easton Pond near to Tomminy Hill, and then turned off to the water on the north side of Windmill Hill. It was defended by five redoubts in front. The second line was more than a quarter of a mile within this, and extended from the sea to the north side of the island, terminating at a battery called the North Battery. On the south, at the entrance by Easton's Beach, was a redoubt which commanded the pass; and there was still another redoubt about twenty rods on the north.[1]

There are three entrances from the sea to Rhode Island, before which the French fleet was now lying: one on the east, called Seconnet, or the Eastern Passage; one on the west, between the island and Canonicut, called the main channel; and one on the west of Canonicut, called the West, or Narraganset, Passage. These waters were defended by several British frigates and a number of small galleys which had been employed as an additional protection to the garrison. It was an extremely critical moment for General Pigot when he found himself threatened, as he then was, by forces enormously superior to his own; indeed, his case would have been hopeless if he had been attacked at once. The French men-of-war, with their heavy armament, could readily have captured the frigates that were locked in the channels and perfectly helpless before such assailants; the land forces, separated as they were, would have been weakened immediately by the capture in detail of fifteen hundred Hessians posted upon Canonicut Island, and the main body of the British at Newport would have been dealt with, under the fire of the fleet in the East Passage and the main channel, by the land forces under General Sullivan. He had then three thousand Continental troops, counting those who had come with the Marquis de La Fayette and General Greene, besides some fifteen hundred to eighteen hundred

[1] General Sullivan to Congress, 31st August, 1778: Amory, Life of Sullivan, p. 85.

militia; and the admiral could have landed from his ships between two and three thousand men of French infantry and sailors,—namely, four battalions of five hundred men each, and two battalions of infantry.[1]

It is extremely difficult to criticise the conduct of this campaign without incurring the danger of doing injustice if we attempt to fix the responsibility of its failure upon any one of the men who were earnestly striving, in both detachments of the allied forces, to assure its success. The tangled chain of misfortunes which no human foresight could have prevented leaves a constant doubt in the mind as to the wisdom or lack of wisdom of the plans, which may have been well laid and might have resulted favorably but for this; and there is every reason to believe that General Sullivan loyally strove for the welfare of his country and its cause, according to his best judgment, in his effort to make the assault by the co-operation of the French and American forces. But it is impossible to doubt that the most favorable moment was lost by him when he asked the Comte d'Estaing for a delay which kept the whole French fleet lying idle for nine days before the harbor of Newport.

It is true, indeed, that the militia were being collected with all diligence from their homes, and were being hurried together from the different States of New England; but it must be taken into account that the British were not idle during the respite thus given them, and that General Pigot took every possible advantage of his slender resources. He abandoned the island of Canonicut and concentrated his strength by bringing over to Newport the fifteen hundred Hessians who had been stationed there; and when it became evident that preparations for

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[1] Colonel Fleury to the Comte d'Estaing, 5th August, 1778: Archives de la Marine, B[4] 146, folios 121–124: Doniol, La Participation de la France, iii. 373. Journal de Campagne du *Marseillais*, 24th July, 1778: Doniol, ibid., iii. 341.

the assault were being made, he either burned or blew up eight British vessels, to prevent them from falling into the hands of the allies.[1]

Not the least important advantage gained by General Pigot from this unexpected delay was the opportunity given to the British spies, whose service was far better organized than the similar means of obtaining information in the Continental army at Rhode Island, to carry to New York a detailed account of the situation from day to day, by which Lord Howe was enabled to arrive with his fleet in relief of the garrison at the very moment when the combined attack was about to be made. Oddly enough, the American commander seems to have left out of his calculations the likelihood that, whilst he was preparing with careful deliberation to invest one of the strongest British positions in America and to capture one of the most important garrisons, Sir Henry Clinton and Admiral Howe were aware of his movements and would set on foot a counter-movement; and, being in total ignorance of their purposes, as he appears to have supposed they were of his, the arrival of the British fleet struck him with amazement. "Unexpected, miraculous, and surprising as General Sullivan considered the appearance of this fleet, which he has done me the honor to declare to me in his letter of the 10th of August," said the Comte d'Estaing, "nevertheless its existence was a fact."[2]

In the mean time, the Marquis de La Fayette, whose feeling toward General Sullivan was one of consideration[3] and respect which inspired him with an earnest desire to

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[1] These were the corvette King Fisher, of sixteen guns, and two galleys, the Spitfire and the Lamb, in the East Passage; the frigates Orpheus, Lark, and Juno, each of thirty-two, Cerberus, twenty-eight, and Falcon, fourteen, in the West Passage. (Comte d'Estaing's official Report to the Secretary of the French Navy, *ubi supra.*)

[2] Comte d'Estaing to Congress, 26th August, 1778; Archives de la Marine, B[4] No. 146, folios 60–69: Doniol, La Participation de la France, iii. 384–392.

[3] See La Fayette's letter to Sullivan, in Amory's Life of Sullivan, p. 73.

co-operate with him in arranging the details of the assault, was incessantly engaged in conveying from the shore to the fleet, and from the fleet back to the head-quarters, information and messages, counsels to the French officers which his acquaintance with America and American customs enabled him to render of great value to his countrymen, and assurances from the Comte d'Estaing of his understanding of, and acquiescence in, the proposals of General Sullivan. His letters of the 5th and 8th of August clearly indicate the variety of subjects which occupied his attention, as well as the great personal activity with which he performed his mission as ambassador between the allied forces: the distribution of the troops at the time of the attack, the supply of field artillery, of boats for landing, of water for the ships, of bricks with which to build ovens in order that the crews might bake bread out of the little flour that still remained of the four months' provisions brought from France, and which was in danger of spoiling if it were not soon used,—these, and very many other details, show themselves in his almost daily correspondence with the admiral.

La Fayette's own personal relations to the French fleet were, under his peculiar circumstances, the cause of some uncertainty to him upon his approach to it, and of no little anxiety as to his reception. Having left France under the ban of the *lettre-de-cachet* which he had wilfully disobeyed, he was still subject to the King's orders given to all commanders of vessels to seize him and bring him back a prisoner; and, if the letter of the law were to be strictly followed, he might be looked upon as a deserter. It is true, of course, as we have already seen, that the French Government had no desire to act harshly with him. To the Comte de Vergennes La Fayette's coming to America was merely an escapade that called for no very serious attention beyond the official steps which reasons of state, in the international relations between France and Great

Britain, made necessary at the time. His reception in the United States and his career as an American officer had already made him a hero in France, and the declaration of war by France removed the responsibility for his actions which the Cabinet had made a show of assuming to the British Ambassador at Versailles. Although La Fayette felt that the pardon of the King would probably be granted him without much difficulty upon his return, he deemed it important to prepare the way for this by reporting himself through the admiral to the Secretary of War, and announcing to him where he then was, with the request that he might be allowed to stay in America as long as the Comte d'Estaing was here.[1] But M. d'Estaing had no hesitation in giving a warm welcome to this young nobleman, his own relative and countryman, whose generous nature enlisted his entire sympathy and of whose success he was undoubtedly proud. He wrote to him immediately upon hearing that he had been ordered to join the forces at Newport, in a letter which he sent from the Languedoc by Major Nevill on the 31st of July: "I shall await you, Monsieur le Marquis, with the greatest impatience. It is you who have turned public opinion in our favor and who are now bringing us aid; a service of prime necessity. You will be able to restore vitality to us;" and, assuming that La Fayette would take a foremost part in the operations about to be undertaken, he congratulated him in advance: "You will have won a still larger share of glory when I have the honor of embracing you: how much that will console us for!"[2]

Soon after his arrival at Providence, La Fayette left his camp and went to present himself to the French admiral aboard the flag-ship, taking with him such of the

[1] La Fayette to the Comte d'Estaing, 31st August: Revue d'Histoire diplomatique, sixième année, No. 3, p. 426.

[2] Archives de la Marine, B[4] 146, fol. 55: Doniol, La Participation de la France, iii. 338.

French officers as were then serving in the Continental army and happened to be near enough to accept an invitation to accompany him. It was the morning of the 4th of August when he made this visit, an interesting note of which was entered in the Journal of the Languedoc kept by the Comte de Cambis, one of M. d'Estaing's officers, and is still preserved in the Archives of the French Navy. Arriving on board at nine o'clock in the morning, La Fayette was received with the most cordial welcome upon the part of the admiral, with salutations and warm congratulations from the officers of the ship, and with repeated cries of "*Vive le Roi!*" by the crew. He spent the day there until five in the afternoon, filled with contentment at being surrounded by his countrymen once more, talking again in his own language of his home, his friends, of all he loved best; and when he returned to shore he had the assurance from the Comte d'Estaing, which gave him exquisite happiness, that he should be given command of a detachment of the landing party from the fleet in connection with his own Continental soldiers and the militia. This was the subject to which he alluded in his letters to M. d'Estaing which we have already seen, as the one thing he earnestly hoped for and about which he was impatient to be reassured. The admiral readily gratified his wish, which no doubt appealed at once to his heart through the enthusiasm of the young soldier and through his devoted attachment to the welfare and glory of France; he sympathized with him in his desire to win honor in the profession in which he himself had spent long years of his life, and which La Fayette may almost be said to have inherited from many generations of his ancestors who had been warriors under the standard of the King.

M. d'Estaing rightly estimated the position which La Fayette had acquired in America. Whilst he smiled at the generalship of a man of twenty, and jocularly alluded to it in his correspondence with him, he comprehended

that this young officer, who had been found worthy of the close friendship of General Washington, and who by his zeal in the cause of American independence had won the esteem of both the soldiers and the citizens of the United States, occupied a position of importance which was likely to prove of valuable service to France. The admiral felt himself bound to report to the ministry at home the step he had taken in receiving M. de La Fayette aboard his ship in spite of his attitude of disobedience to the King, justifying it, however, by the assurance that whilst "his extreme impatience to prove that he had come to fight the English in order that he might the better learn to serve his master induced me to receive him aboard the Languedoc, with a personal satisfaction mingled with some anxiety upon political grounds," yet "no one is in a better position than this young general officer to become an additional bond of unity between France and America. He enjoys here the highly merited consideration which is due to his zeal, his gallantry, and his wisdom."[1]

In the course of the day spent by La Fayette on board the Languedoc, during which he was in intimate consultation with the Comte d'Estaing, the subject of the coming attack was fully discussed by them, the manner of making it, the methods of co-operation, and the disembarkation of the French troops, as well as the minute details that required attention and preparation in a matter of so great importance. We have no direct account of the interview, of which, indeed, nothing was known, and which was almost forgotten, as one of the incidents of the time, until the fortunate discovery by M. Doniol of the package of letters in the Archives of the French Navy, already referred to, brought to light the communications of La Fayette to the admiral in the midst of these operations, which present an extremely interesting view of the pur-

[1] Comte d'Estaing's official Report to the Secretary of the French Navy, *ut supra.*

poses of M. d'Estaing himself, of his ideas as they are reflected by answers to questions asked or suggestions made by La Fayette, and of the attitude of the French officers toward the plans proposed by General Sullivan. The first of these is a letter of La Fayette, from Providence, on the day after he had been aboard the Languedoc. Upon his leaving the flag-ship, at five o'clock in the afternoon, the admiral had sent him on board the frigate Provence, which was ordered to sail with him up the West Passage and to set him ashore at a convenient point from which he might reach Providence. But a fog, which came in shortly after his departure, delayed the Provence, so that it was late in the evening before he arrived at his quarters. In the morning, therefore, he wrote as follows:[1]

"Providence, 5th August, 1778.

"I arrived here last night, Monsieur le Comte, and I have spoken earnestly this morning upon the various subjects which you did me the honor to intrust to me, and in regard to which I should be more positive if I had not met here an officer whose commission antedates my own, in the person of General Sullivan. He has sent in every direction to collect provisions, some of which have already been sent forward to the fleet; and orders have been given to bake biscuits at several different places. A man has been sent to you who will point out a better place to obtain water than from the dried-up wells which have been used heretofore. You will also receive several boats loaded with barrels of water, which will bring back any prisoners of whom you desire to be relieved; a search is about to be made, with an example as well, I hope, for the militiamen who robbed those whom you intrusted to their charge, and we shall try to disgust them with this English practice. You will receive the field pieces, and the boats will be sent you as well as the horses. Finally, Monsieur le Comte, instead of six thousand bricks, I have been assured that you will have twenty thousand before long. Would to heaven that our troops were increased in the same proportion as these bricks; but it seems that, instead of fourteen thousand men, we are able to count upon scarcely ten thousand now, and these have not all

[1] Revue d'Histoire diplomatique, sixième année, No. 3, p. 413.

come in; though the Continental troops are going to join to-morrow such of the militia as may be at the common rendezvous.

"As to the great undertaking, Monsieur le Comte, that in which the success of the expedition, the satisfaction of the fleet, as well as of the land troops, indeed all the advantages that we hope for, are concerned, I cannot boast of having made great progress in my negotiation.

"The attack at a single point, the concentration of the American troops, especially of the Continental forces, the rectangular movement which may enclose the English, are the methods that meet with the greatest favor. I have argued that if the enemy were divided in a similar operation they would be much less formidable; that several false attacks and two real ones would secure for us this advantage, that the English would lose in reconnoitring the time which they should employ in marching and in fighting whenever we put them into a situation to commit this folly; and that, finally, when we should make a descent we should not be obliged to wait until we were nearly all ashore before disembarking our best forces, as would be the case under the plan now proposed to our troops.

"I have also said that if it were too much to give you a wing of the army, you would be satisfied with a detachment; that you would leave to General Sullivan the *greater part* of his Continental troops; that a small number of them should be united with the militia, making two or three thousand men altogether, who, by being joined with the French troops, would thus be assured of protection and of a constantly reliable example; that this debarkation would be made under the fire of the ships, which would enable us to unite with them in the same manner as he should unite with us under the plan of operations which I submitted to you. You will observe that, if he does not accept the plan of making the attack upon the redoubts at two points, he still does not lose the advantage of the rectangle in question, but will even give to it a more regular form by prolonging your side.

"Finally, I added that we not only owe to the fleet this whole expedition, because without the fleet it would not have been undertaken, but that it is the support from the fleet which will assure our success at the moment of the attack. The sound and the effect of your thunders, the division of the points at which an attack is to be feared, the descent under your fire of a body of troops uncertain in number but recognized to be considerable, whose first steps will disclose to the enemy that there are French-

men among them, will be the disturbing spectacle presented to the English, and which they will be relieved of if we follow out slavishly the brilliant plan which I had the honor to present to you.

"But my ideas, Monsieur le Comte, did not strike either General Sullivan or General Greene as I could have wished. You will see by the reply of the former, that, if he sends you a reinforcement, it will be of so little importance that the idea would never enter his head that I should prefer it to the command of his wing of six thousand men because it secures me the happiness of serving under your orders as a companion in glory of the Frenchmen, my dear countrymen. Besides, he expects that you will retain command of this whole detachment; and he considers me to be of a certain usefulness to him, which I do not comprehend myself, with this famous left wing.

"But I have not omitted to say that the French fleet is prepared to take an important part in this action; that our landing party ought to be considered of great value; that after we have come ashore in safety there will be no objection to changing the arrangement, but that, if there is to be danger to be met, the French troops have the right to participate in it, and that this is the only mark of recognition for which they ask; so that, in either case, the descent should be made by all at the same time, and in such a manner that each party might be in a position to take advantage of any opportunity to distinguish itself that fortune might offer it. I am aware that it is not pleasant to some people to see the finest scenes in the play taken by foreign actors; I feel that the Frenchmen will somewhat eclipse their neighbors and that the best dramatic effects will probably fall to their share. General Sullivan's attack, although extremely important in itself, would be rather what they call in comedy *en robe de chambre*, compared with the spectacle which your fleet and your troops would present; but, without expecting hearts which are not French to beat with the same emotion that I should feel myself at the sight of the glory won by my countrymen, I should be greatly disappointed if they were not allowed the advantage which I think is rightfully theirs of being brought more nearly into the place which they ought to occupy in this expedition.

"General Sullivan has no objection, after the landing party shall be no longer under your immediate orders, to permitting it to take up its position where I shall have the honor to command. But that is not in accordance with the plan which you were kind enough to communicate to me. The idea that your troops should

come ashore after the descent was substantially accomplished, is not acceptable to me under any consideration. As to the number of men in the detachment which he intends for you, I have told him that I should like to command it, whether it were great or small, and that the pleasure of fighting in view of my own countrymen could not be made up to me by any conceivable wing; and that, for that matter, I should resume command of the number of troops to which I am entitled after I had rejoined him. I confess to you that I should not like to see the French troops with people whose foreign hearts could not appreciate their value.

"This part of my letter is immensely long, Monsieur le Comte, but I am anxious to report to you what I have said, what has been said to me in reply, and to acquaint you with the impressions that I have obtained. Now I shall ask your permission to add what my limited acquaintance with this country leads me to hope for. Your plan appears to me very far from having failed. If, in your reply to General Sullivan, you mention it again as, in your judgment, necessary to the success of the expedition, as conforming to your own wishes and to the desires of those who are under your command; and if you add to this your military conclusions and insist upon them with firmness, these gentlemen will find it easier to submit than to answer you; and they will then enlarge the detachment which they intend to assign to you. The number has not been definitely fixed in General Sullivan's letter. Appear to be certain then, at least, of two thousand men of whom half or one-third shall be Continental troops. If you should join to this the kindness of asking that I shall command them, or at least that they *shall be offered to me*, I assure you that my choice will come from my heart and that I shall have reached the utmost limit of my desires.

"This militia, Monsieur le Comte, will serve at least to make a show, to make a noise, and to inspire fear, whilst your Frenchmen are doing the damage; their method of fighting is so different from that with which we have lulled the Englishmen here to sleep, that those in Rhode Island must surely be astonished by it.

"I shall leave to-morrow for the town where the troops are going. Next Sunday has been fixed upon as the date of the attack *if we are ready*. You see that there will still be time to send you a reinforcement if you reply at once. This letter will be delivered to you by M. de Gouvion, of whom I have already spoken to you, and whom I now send in order that he may describe to you that part of the island which he has already seen, whilst

he will be able at the same time to reconnoitre another part of it. M. de Gouvion is liked and esteemed by everybody most capable of forming a judgment about him. He is accompanied by M. de Noirmont, a French officer who is exceedingly anxious to see the fleet, and whom I have the honor of presenting to you.

"When I know that you have written upon the subjects which you have done me the honor to mention to me, I may, if it seems proper to you, say a word or two about them in my personal letters to the President of Congress, with whom my relations are very good. As to General Washington, I shall leave it to you to write to him, and he will surely not keep the matter a secret from me; all I wish to know is the date of your letters, so that I may arrange accordingly.

"Pardon, a thousand times pardon, Monsieur le Comte, for having detained you so long; I thought that by writing fast I should make my letter short, but the national interests, my desire to succeed in the undertaking which you intrusted to me, the delight which I should feel at seeing the French soldiers in a position where they could do their best,—all these things spoke within me at once, and it has not been easy to restrain myself. I shall now hasten to conclude by assuring you, Monsieur le Comte, how greatly I appreciate your kindness toward me and how sincerely and tenderly I am attached to you.

"LAFAYETTE.

"I have had the honor of seeing M. de Pleville and of offering him my services as an interpreter and a citizen of Providence."

We have at present no means of discovering precisely what the errand was upon which La Fayette had gone at the request of M. d'Estaing; their conversations have not been recorded, so far as we know, and the letters of the admiral which would no doubt throw light upon it were probably among the personal documents and other papers of the Marquis de La Fayette which were destroyed at Chavaniac during the excesses of the French Revolution. It is evident, however, that it related chiefly to the plans of the campaign, to the method of uniting the French and the American troops, and especially to the points at which the attack upon Rhode Island should be made. It appears from this letter of La Fayette, of the 5th of

August, that both General Sullivan and General Greene were in favor of making a landing at a single point under fire of the ships and an immediate assault upon the garrison with all the troops, which plan the admiral did not approve of. He evidently insisted that a more effective descent could be made by simultaneous operations at two points at least; after which, the troops being once safely ashore upon the island, the whole force should be united for an assault upon the enemy's works before the town of Newport.

It may, or it may not, have been as a result of La Fayette's presentation of the admiral's opinion to General Sullivan that the plan finally adopted was that the island should be approached from two different points; but it was agreed that the army should be divided into two separate bodies, one under General Greene which should cross over and make its landing from Tiverton, and the other under the Marquis de La Fayette, composed of the French marines, infantry, and sailors, and such Continental troops and militia as should have been assigned to his command, which should cross from the island of Canonicut. It was understood that the fleet should have forced the Middle Passage at the proper moment and should have captured the British troops at Canonicut, after which that island should be used by the admiral for his base of operations. Once upon Rhode Island, both divisions of the army would have united in the assault upon Newport. It was not considered necessary to give serious attention to the small British force posted in the works at the northern end of the island, because they were not strong enough to threaten the rear of the army, and after the town had been captured they were certain to fall into the hands of the victors. As we have seen, however, General Pigot rescued his men from Canonicut during the delay which occurred whilst the American forces were being got in readiness, and he afterward re-

called those at the northern end of Rhode Island; so that this part of the plan of the allies was defeated before the attack began. La Fayette's allusion to the President of Congress and to General Washington relates to something which we have not now the means of determining; possibly to an operation to be undertaken by the fleet against some of the British provinces or the islands in the West Indies after the capture of Newport. Very naturally his earnest desire to command the French detachment was uppermost in his mind and in his correspondence. His sympathies were with his countrymen to such a degree that he wanted for them all the glory that it was possible to obtain, and the longing of his heart was to share it with them and to be recognized at home as having performed his duty as a Frenchman. His pride in the national greatness of France made all else subordinate in his mind to the valor and prestige of his countrymen. If our own country occupied but the second place in the comparison, at this distance of time we can sympathize with him in the feeling which is the birthright of every loyal man, to look upon his own national cause as the best cause, his own flag as the best flag, and his own countrymen as the best soldiers.

By General Sullivan's first plan, which he communicated to the admiral upon the occasion of his visit to the flag-ship immediately after the arrival of the fleet, it was proposed that M. d'Estaing should detach a proper force to enter the Eastern and Western Channels and capture the enemy's ships stationed there; to block the Main Channel with the rest of the fleet, and to cut off the retreat of the British ships, as well as to prevent the arrival of reinforcements for the garrison. The French ships in the Eastern and Western Channels were afterward to cover the descent of the American troops from Tiverton and Bristol. At the moment of the attack, the French fleet was to force the passage into Newport harbor,

to bombard the town, and to disembark the marines and infantry at the most suitable point to second the American attack.[1]

The admiral proceeded at once to execute his part of this operation by sending into the Western Passage the ship of the line Sagittaire, on the morning of the 30th of July. The Sagittaire ran by the batteries of the enemy, which opened fire from the west side of Canonicut, and, having returned a broadside, she proceeded to her station without receiving any injury. Shortly afterward an explosion at the enemy's batteries was observed, which induced the belief that they had been abandoned, as they were subsequently found to have been. The admiral also ordered two frigates, the Aimable and the Alcmène, with the (prize) tender Stanley, to enter the Eastern Passage; where, upon their approach, the enemy set fire to their frigate the Kingfisher, to the Lamb, and to the Spitfire, cutting the latter adrift to act as a fire-ship. The Comte de Grasse-Limermont was ordered to the command of a boat to tow the Spitfire off, in the performance of which duty he was in imminent danger; for the vessel blew up after his grapnel was fixed, but, fortunately, injured neither him nor his crew. A French officer, M. de Dorset, sent aboard the Kingfisher to extinguish the flames, had also a marvellous escape; her magazine blew up after he and his men were upon her deck, but without killing or wounding any of them.[2]

M. d'Estaing was anxious to take possession of Canonicut Island and to capture its garrison, which he could have done during a general assault by landing troops upon the west side and forcing a passage into the main channel with his large ships, so as to cut off communication between Canonicut and Rhode Island and prevent

[1] Simms, Correspondence of J. Laurens, p. 211.

[2] Comte d'Estaing's official Report to the Secretary of the French Navy, *ubi supra.*

General Pigot from throwing reinforcements across. But in order to accomplish this end before the combined attack he would have had to sustain alone the attack from the enemy's batteries on Rhode Island, because it was found impracticable to anchor his ships anywhere out of the reach of their deliberate fire. Therefore, as General Sullivan was not ready to make the combined assault upon all the enemy's positions, the admiral was obliged to abandon this attempt and to wait until the American troops should be in readiness to co-operate with him; and upon the following day, the 31st, he discovered, by a patrol sent out to reconnoitre, that the British had evacuated Canonicut Island. The Sagittaire, having been reinforced by the Fantasque, sailed to the north of Canonicut, where the British immediately destroyed their frigates Orpheus, Lark, and Juno, of thirty-two guns, the Cerberus, of twenty-eight, and the corvette Falcon, of fourteen.

In the mean time, the negotiations with General Sullivan were so far successful that the American commander decided to send a detachment to support the French landing-party when the general attack should be made, and to give the command of it, at the request of M. d'Estaing, to the Marquis de La Fayette. Of this we have the proof in La Fayette's letter to the admiral, as follows:[1]

"At the Quarters of General Sullivan,
"the 8th of August, 1778.

"You will see, Monsieur le Comte, by General Sullivan's letter, that, in consequence of the one which he has received from you this morning, he will send a detachment to join your troops, and he intends to give me the command of it. As agreeable as this hope is to me, I had entirely abandoned it, and I had relinquished my desire to obtain a personal advantage which you regard as contrary to the general good. But, as your letter had already produced the *proper effect*, I concluded that my refusal now would merely complicate this matter and that I might appear

[1] Revue d'Histoire diplomatique, sixième année, No. 3, p. 416.

to disturb the general plan by my own fancies. I have simply replied that my attachment to America, and my still greater affection for my countrymen, make my situation a delicate one. It has been decided that it is suitable to send me with this detachment, although it is disproportionate to the command which I should have had; and I have accepted it because I thought I ought to do so for many reasons, of which I trust you will not disapprove.

"We shall not have as many men, by far, as it was hoped we should. I have suspected this, and it renders our operation incomplete because the plan was drawn up before the arrival of the troops. General Sullivan had to recruit an army; and what an army, if we except the Continental troops! You must expect to see some curious figures, and mine at the head of them. I shall be mortified, not if these gentlemen are not well trimmed, for they have had neither the time nor the means for that, but if they do not fight as well as one can expect at least from raw troops.

"It is reported, Monsieur le Comte, that I am to join you to-morrow afternoon, when the enemy will have an opportunity to see us at their ease; Monday appears to be the day set for the attack, *if all is ready*. That on the west will succeed certainly, and the reason is easy to imagine; my detachment, animated by the example, will follow, will show itself, will fire, and that will accomplish something. Our junction with General Sullivan cannot be deferred very long; for, once we are upon the island, the two divisions will be forced to advance, and that will be the means of uniting us. I do not think you will have reason to fear what you have slightly touched upon in your letter.

"Send me word, Monsieur le Comte, if you consider it indispensably necessary for me to stay here; for, in that event, my desire to follow your views will weigh with me beyond every other consideration. But, if you will do me the honor to admit my opinion, I dare to say that a new arrangement under present circumstances would be likely to produce a bad effect; and it is that which has kept me silent in this matter.

"Adieu, Monsieur le Comte; I am obliged to end my letter, and I postpone until to-morrow the pleasure of a longer conversation, only assuring you at this time of my devoted and sincere attachment."

It is evident that, while the Comte d'Estaing had acceded to La Fayette's intense desire to command the de-

tachment of French troops, and while he had gone so far as to request this favor from General Sullivan in behalf of his young relative and friend, his own mature judgment in similar matters had led him to caution La Fayette not to press his demand too strongly, but rather to accept the decision of General Sullivan even at the cost of personal sacrifice, if that should be necessary, in order to aid the plans of co-operation by every means in his power, and to contribute toward the success of the undertaking. It is to this that La Fayette referred in his letter when he announced to the admiral that he had been offered the command and had accepted it, with the hope that his action would receive M. d'Estaing's approval. Undoubtedly the position of La Fayette was an exceedingly delicate one, in which nothing but the greatest caution could preserve him from criticism or from the jealousy of other officers, aroused by the suspicion that his request for a particular command was an attempt upon his part to assume a more prominent share in the expedition than he was entitled to. His active spirit and his enthusiasm for the glory of France made it all the more difficult for him; and, indeed, he did not escape from creating the very irritation which the more experienced eye of the French admiral had foreseen.

The delay, and the more or less unimportant differences of opinion between the French and the American commanders as to the plan of landing the troops, had produced a slight tension between the allies, which, of course, was not apparent in the friendly relations that were constantly maintained, but which nevertheless caused each side to watch the movements and the purposes of the other with somewhat closer scrutiny. It was expected at first that the Comte d'Estaing would take command himself of the French troops that were to land; and this appears to have been his intention, if the American general had consented to detach one wing of his army

to act with him, or, at all events, a force large enough to make up a command suitable to the dignity of a lieutenant-general and an admiral of France. When it was decided, however, to send him merely a detachment of a thousand men, because the strength of General Sullivan's army would not permit him to dispose in that manner of a greater force, the admiral acquiesced in this decision, but asked that La Fayette should have the command. He objected also, as we have seen from the correspondence with La Fayette, to the plan proposed by General Sullivan, that the landing should be made at a single point, which was upon the east side of the island, by the American forces first, under cover of the fire of the French ships, and that when their descent had been effected the French troops should disembark and form a junction with them.

We happen to have evidence of the feeling toward both La Fayette and the Comte d'Estaing in the American camp at that time, in a valuable letter of Colonel John Laurens, written to his father, the President of Congress, on the 22d of August,[1] in which he recounted the incident whilst it was still fresh in his mind, as follows:

"According to the first plan proposed by General Sullivan, the American forces were to land on the east side of Rhode Island under cover of the fire of three frigates stationed in the eastern channel for that purpose. A signal was to be given immediately as our boats should begin to cross, and another when the descent should be effected. Upon the latter, the French troops were to disembark on the east side of the island, and a junction was to be formed as speedily as possible; but the ambition of an individual and national pride discovered insuperable obstacles to this disposition. The Marquis de Lafayette aspired to the command of the French troops in conjunction with the flower of Gen[l] Sullivan's army. In a visit which he had paid to the fleet, he prevailed upon the Count D'Estaing to write upon this subject. The count

[1] The Army Correspondence of Colonel John Laurens in the Years 1777-8, Wm. Gilmore Simms, New York, 1867, p. 217.

intimated in his letter a desire that some good American troops sh^d^ be annexed to the French, adding that if the command of them were given to M. de Lafayette it w^d^ be a means of facilitating the junction between the troops of the two nations, as he was acquainted with the service of both, and that in case any naval operations sh^d^ require his (the count's) return on board the squadron, the Marquis w^d^ naturally take the command in his absence, which w^d^ prevent many difficulties that w^d^ arise on that account. The Marquis strenuously contended that a considerable detachment of select troops ought to be annexed to the French. The pride of his nation would never suffer the present disposition to take place, as by it the French battalions w^d^ land under cover of the American fire, and play a humiliating secondary part.

"The arguments against gratifying him in his request were these: General Sullivan's army contained a very small proportion of regular troops; it was necessary that a main body capable of resisting the enemy's force should exist, as a contrary conduct w^d^ expose either division to a total defeat or a vigorous attack from the enemy. The Marquis, however, seemed much dissatisfied, and his private views withdrew his attention wholly from the general interest.

"On the 8th General Sullivan received a letter from the Admiral, in which he says that the disposition for disembarking is militarily impossible. That the American generals were now for the first time furnished with an opportunity of discovering the value which they set on the French alliance, by the number and composition of the troops which they w^d^ annex to the French. It was not for him to point out the number, but he w^d^ gladly have it in his power to give an account both to the Congress and his King of the American detachm^t^ which should be sent to him. In consequence of this letter, it was determined that Jackson's regiment, and as many good militia as in the whole w^d^ amount to 1,000 men sh^d^ be sent under the command of the Marquis."

This account given by Colonel Laurens accords with the statement of the details as they are presented in the correspondence of La Fayette, and in such of the Comte d'Estaing's papers as refer to them; it is imbued, however, with a certain personal feeling, the expression of which was, no doubt, justifiable from the strictly confidential nature of a communication of a son to his father upon subjects which interested them both, and it presents a

bias which weakens it somewhat as to the conclusions we should draw from it if we consider it in the strictest sense an historical document. Colonel Laurens, to whom La Fayette referred in the most generous terms,[1] appears not to have had a strong liking for La Fayette, of whom he wrote with a touch of scorn in a letter upon another subject, as we shall see later; and it would hardly be fair for us, with the cooler judgment of to-day, to accept without question an opinion formed amidst the storm of disappointment which arose after the failure of the combined attack upon Newport, in which this young officer alludes to "the ambition of an individual and national pride" in a manner which might lead an incautious observer to regard these things as much more serious obstacles than they were in fact. Colonel John Laurens was one of the most estimable young officers of the Revolutionary War: a man of superior cultivation, of sterling patriotism, and of marked personal gallantry, he rendered distinguished services to the American cause, for which, to the grief of the army and of the nation, he laid down his life. His memory must always be held in honor by his countrymen. At the period of which we are now treating, however, he was but twenty-one or twenty-two years of age; and he thought and wrote with the intense feeling of youth. We have a comprehensive view of La Fayette's ambition to command the French troops, in his own letters to the admiral, to whom he freely opened his heart under the circumstances which threw him into contact, in a foreign land, with his compatriot and kinsman, and impelled him to a confidence that was absolute in matters relating to himself. By his own showing, he was loyal to America throughout; there was, moreover, nothing inconsistent with this loyalty in his ambition, since all were striving for a common purpose and for the success of a common

[1] La Fayette's letter of the 14th of July to the Comte d'Estaing, *supra*.

cause; and when he had been warned by M. d'Estaing that his wishes might arouse opposition, he declared that he had abandoned them.

He shared with the Comte d'Estaing, it is true, the national pride which demanded that, in any combined operation which might be undertaken, the French troops should have a post similar in honor and equal in danger to that of their allies. In this the Comte d'Estaing was asking nothing more than the courtesy accorded by the usages of war everywhere in the civilized world in his time. He could not otherwise justify himself before his country and his King. What seemed unmeaning punctilio to the men who had left their farms and workshops and counting-houses in New England to come down to fight the British at Newport was in fact but the working of a system upon which standing armies were trained in European countries, and upon which international relations were supported, a system which had grown out of the custom of centuries of war and had been approved by universal consent. The Comte d'Estaing placed himself and his forces upon an exact equality with the American troops, however small the national importance of the United States or however insignificant their army in the eyes of the world at that time, and he considered himself as serving under the orders of General Sullivan, the commander of the expedition; this was a duty which he owed to the allies of his King. But it is only just, in the interest of a true understanding of historical events, to remember that, from his stand-point, M. d'Estaing was making a concession to circumstances, when he regarded the formidable armament under his command, with the well-equipped and well-disciplined soldiers and sailors of France, as being, in a military sense, upon precisely the same level with a few thousand Continentals and militiamen, many of whom had been hastily brought from their homes whilst he was lying in American waters

ready to fight, and when he subordinated his thirty years of experience as a soldier to the leadership of a New Hampshire lawyer whom accident had at that moment placed at their head. It will be well to remember this side of the case in considering the angry discussion which followed, and to reflect that there were probably real causes of grievance between these two sets of people, so different in their customs and their understanding, or conventional grievances, which appeared equally serious with real ones, upon both sides.

Finally, after much negotiation between the Comte d'Estaing and General Sullivan, during which La Fayette had gone incessantly from the shore to the Languedoc and from the Languedoc back to the camp, the tedious delay was overcome; and on the 8th of August everything was ready. The moment for the attack was definitively fixed and understood by General Sullivan for the morning of the 10th.

La Fayette gave an interesting account of the troops and the preparations in a letter to M. d'Estaing, as follows:[1]

"I have just seen a colonel of artillery who is ordered to send us some cannon of respectable calibre. General Greene, the Quartermaster-General, and also Major-General, is superintending the collection of the boats, and I think he will ultimately command the militia of Providence, his native place. It seems to me that they are raising a great number of this kind of troops; those of New England have the reputation of being very brave, and I have no doubt of it, but I think they will find a great difference between the kind of war they have been making up to this time and that which awaits them at the attack upon Rhode Island. Anything that requires rapid movement does not suit them at all, and surely General Sullivan understands them too well not to make use of them in the manner to which they are best adapted. I am very glad to see him in command here, because he is brave and enterprising."

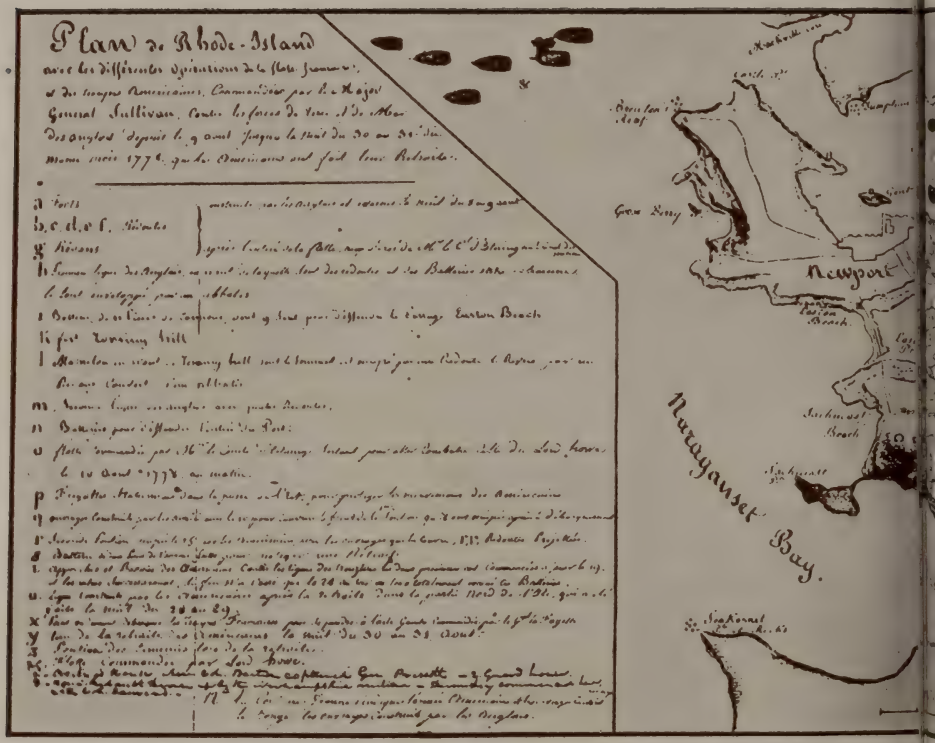
[1] From Norwich, 30th July, 1778: Revue d'Histoire diplomatique, sixième année, No. 3, p. 411.

CHAPTER XIV.

OPERATIONS OF THE ALLIED FORCES AT NEWPORT.—(*Continued.*)

The Comte d'Estaing had prepared his landing-party, which he divided into four battalions of five hundred men each, composed of sailors and marines, besides the French infantry which he had on his ships, who made up the whole number to about three thousand men. The sailors were armed with muskets such as were carried on shipboard, which for this occasion were provided with bayonets made of the blades of cutlasses from which the hilts had been removed; these were inserted between the ends of the barrels and the wood and secured by a strong wrapping of tarred rope.[1] Everything being in readiness, then, for the execution of the combined attack, which, as we have seen, was to be made simultaneously from Tiverton, on the east side, by the American troops, and from Canonicut, on the west side, by the French with the detachment of Americans sent to join them, under the command of the Marquis de La Fayette, the Comte d'Estaing entered the main channel on the 8th of August. With eight of his ships of the line he ran by the batteries on Rhode Island, which immediately opened a heavy fire upon him, to the position he had selected at the northern part of the channel, whence he intended to send his men ashore upon Canonicut to form for the attack and to unite there with the American detachment. He executed this manœuvre with admirable skill and with

[1] Journal de Campagne du *Marseillais:* Doniol, La Participation de la France, iii. 341.


Plan de Rhode-Island
avec les différentes opérations de la flotte Française
et des troupes Américaines, Commandées par le Major
General Sullivan, contre les forces de Mr. le Chr.
des Anglois depuis le 9 août jusqu'au 30 ou 31 du
même mois 1778. par les Américains aux ordres de Mr. le Comte d'Estaing
a Forts
b, c, d, e, f. Batteries
g Redoutes
h Grande ligne des Anglois, qui avoit été tracée pour défendre le front de la Batterie de Brenton
i Retranchemens qui avoient été faits pour défendre le Camp
k Fort Touring hill
l Montagne ou étoit le Touring hill sur laquelle on avoit placé quelques Pièces de Canon pour
Battre en Ricochet le Camp
m Grande ligne des anglois avec quatre Redoutes
n Batteries pour défendre l'entrée du Port
o Flotte Commandée par Mr. le Comte d'Estaing, laquelle prit cette Position le 29 au matin
le 10 Août 1778.
p Frégattes Anglaises dans le port, qui furent brûlées par les Américains
q Navires Coulés par les Anglois pour fermer l'entrée de l'Est
r Navires Anglois coulés le 9. par les Américains pour les empêcher de sortir
s Batteries dans les Retranchemens que les Anglois avoient faits
t Approches et Ravins des Américains Contre les lignes des Anglois
u Ligne tendue par les Américains depuis la N. Redoute dans le grand Nord de l'Ile, qui a été
faite le matin du 29 au 30
x Pont de bateaux Sur lequel les Troupes Françoises passèrent le grand Canal commandé par le Pont de Frégates
y Camp de la retraite des Américains la nuit du 30 au 31 Août
z Position des Troupes Françoises le 29 Août
Mr. le Chr. Commandoit dans Lord Howe.
Redoute de Brenton sur laquelle on avoit arboré Pavillon Blanc
Grande Redoute sur laquelle on avoit arboré Pavillon Blanc
Redoute sur laquelle on avoit arboré Pavillon Blanc
Nota. Les Troupes Françoises ont campé sur les mêmes Camps occupés par les Troupes Américaines
le 29 août les ouvrages construits par les Anglois.
Brenton's Reef
Gaw Bay
Newport
Easton Beach
Sachuest Beach
Narragansett Bay.
Seaconnet Pt.

Passage
du
Milieu
Rhode
Island
Chenal de l'Est
Passage
de
l'Est

entire success: so that on the night of Saturday, the 8th, he was in readiness for the general action on the following Monday morning. He was strictly carrying out the plan, upon his part, as it had been defined by the American commander.

On Sunday morning he began at seven o'clock to disembark his troops; and, with some dozen or fifteen flat-boats which had been sent to him for the purpose, in connection with the boats carried by his vessels, he was occupied nearly all the morning in transporting his men and his artillery to Canonicut. As soon as they arrived ashore they were drawn up in order and drilled, so as to accustom them somewhat to their footing upon land, which they had not stepped upon then for nearly four months. At eleven o'clock in the morning, whilst this work was in progress, and at the moment when M. d'Estaing himself was about to go ashore upon Canonicut, an aide-de-camp arrived from the Marquis de La Fayette, to announce that General Sullivan had not waited for the appointed time, but, as he saw that the British had withdrawn their troops from the fortifications at the northern end of the island when the French vessels were coming up the channel, he had hastened to cross over to take advantage of the position they had abandoned; that he was now upon Rhode Island with between two thousand and three thousand men, but that, as he had no artillery and was without a considerable part of his munitions of war, he desired the assistance of the admiral.

This news struck the Comte d'Estaing with amazement. That General Sullivan had deliberately broken his agreement, without previously notifying him, and without consulting with him as to the possible necessity of a change of policy, was, in his eyes, an act of discourtesy which nothing could explain. It aroused a storm of anger among the officers and men of the French fleet, who protested loudly, upon every side, that they had

been unfairly treated, and that the dignity of France had been insulted by conduct which was unjustifiable and intolerable. As another unfortunate step in this ill-starred expedition, this event destroyed at once the cordial relations which had subsisted between the allies at the outset; it made a serious breach in the confidence with which each side regarded the other, and, without doubt, it had an important bearing upon the subsequent actions of the French commander. The Frenchmen began to look with suspicion upon their English-speaking friends, as wilful, careless, and unreliable. The Americans considered the French officers as over-sensitive, excitable, and absurdly tenacious of their scruples about things that were of no consequence. The ready pen of Colonel John Laurens was employed to inform the President of Congress that[1] "this measure gave much umbrage to the French officers. They conceived their troops injured by our landing first, and talked like women disputing precedence in a country-dance, instead of men engaged in pursuing the common interest of two great nations."

The question has frequently been discussed by the historians of this campaign, with varying degrees of censure upon the French admiral, and an historian of our own day has expressed the opinion that "D'Estaing was unreasonably offended at not being previously consulted. He was unduly sensitive and punctilious," which he supports by the perfectly true statement that "the war was an American war in America," plainly suggesting the inference, which is not true, that therefore the Americans might do as they pleased.[2]

The fact is, however, that, under the circumstances of his presence in America as the commander of the King's fleet, by reason of his cordial support of the American

[1] Simms, Correspondence of John Laurens, p. 220.

[2] Amory's Life of Sullivan, p. 74.

cause and his constantly expressed wish to further the interests of the United States, as well as by the dignity of his own rank and the prestige of the forces which he led, the Comte d'Estaing was entitled to be treated upon all occasions with the highest consideration.

The action of General Sullivan, although insignificant as to its practical results one way or the other, was a breach of professional courtesy. Considered in the abstract, it was a grave personal offence. M. d'Estaing had waited patiently for General Sullivan, under circumstances which were distressing in the extreme both to himself and to all the men of his fleet, until the American forces should be ready to act. He asked for no especial credit for this, because he looked upon it as one of the uncontrollable incidents of war; but he believed that in return his services would be recognized, and that proper respect would be shown to him personally.

After all, the most serious result of this incident, and one which appears to have been lost sight of by most writers upon the subject, was the belief in the mind not only of the Comte d'Estaing but of every Frenchman in the fleet, that General Sullivan was jealous of the French prestige, that he was anxious to reap the glory of the action at Newport for himself, and that, in order to make it appear like an American victory with the French acting a secondary part, he had taken an unfair advantage of them and had secretly made a landing upon Rhode Island before they knew that a movement was contemplated.

We have no reason to-day to believe that this is true of General Sullivan, or that his intentions were other than entirely honorable. But the movement he made was unnecessary at that moment, and the position he gained by it was absolutely without military importance. The British general abandoned the redoubts at the northern end of the island because they were capable of protecting

only a very small force, and from their isolated position they could not have been held by him after the French fleet came into the channel and the Americans were preparing to land from Tiverton; the only advantage thus gained by him was that he secured this small number of men from being made prisoners of war by calling them in to Newport. General Sullivan took the abandoned redoubts, which the British did not want, and which were of so little consequence that they had not even been taken serious account of in the American plan of attack.[1] They neither threatened his position, nor aided him in his plans after he had taken them; nor was there the least danger that the enemy would return to them; for all that General Pigot wished was to withdraw his troops from them. And, in his precipitate haste to land upon Rhode Island, General Sullivan had left his artillery behind; so that he could not have defended himself if he had been attacked, and he was forced to call upon the fleet for protection. He threw himself open to the angry imputation of the French officers, that his motive was not a fair one; he fatally injured their good will toward himself personally, and he weakened appreciably their enthusiasm for the American cause.

M. d'Estaing, however, did not permit his personal feelings upon that occasion to influence him against any measure that lay within the strict limits of his duty or that was likely to be of service to the common undertaking. He gave orders immediately that the troops already landed upon Canonicut should be transferred from there to Rhode Island, to join General Sullivan, and he detailed two of his ships, the Fantasque and the

[1] "The troops were not to amuse themselves with attacking the works in the northern part of the Island; but a sufficient detachment was to be left to be a guard upon the troops posted in those works, while the main body was to advance rapidly to the attack of the fort and redoubts, which immediately environ the town of Newport."—Simms, Correspondence of John Laurens, p. 211.

Sagittaire, to protect their passage.[1] But, unfortunately, at the moment when measures were being taken to carry out this order, and whilst the Fantasque and the Sagittaire were getting under way, the fog which had hung over the entrance to the harbor since early morning lifted, and the lookout at the mast-head of the Languedoc reported a large fleet of war-vessels flying the British flag a short distance out from the main channel, consisting, so far as could be determined with the glasses, of twenty-six vessels, of which at least fourteen were ships of the line. This was the fleet of Admiral Howe, who had left New York on the 6th of August, upon information given by the British spies of what was taking place at Newport, and who had come out to aid the garrison.

The situation of M. d'Estaing under this sudden change of circumstances was extremely embarrassing both to himself and to all his commanders. His ships were separated in the three channels, he was shut in the harbor where it would be exceedingly difficult to manœuvre with his larger vessels in case of attack, and a considerable part of his force was already ashore. He decided at once that he must re-embark his men and prepare for action; and therefore he ordered all the marines, sailors, and infantry on Canonicut Island to return to their ships. He called a council of war on board the Languedoc, which was attended by all the captains of the fleet; and it was determined that, in view of the fact that the winds were at that season almost constantly unfavorable to vessels going out, all the French vessels should be brought as closely together as possible during the night in order to present their concentrated force in the event of attack. This manœuvre was carried out with partial success, and upon the following morning some of the French ships were still working their way to the positions assigned to them, when

[1] Journal of the Comte de Cambis aboard the Languedoc; Archives de la Marine, B[4] 147, fol. 17: Doniol, La Participation de la France, iii. 375.

the wind, which had been variable from the west-southwest to northwest, suddenly changed and blew freshly from the north-northeast; whereupon the French admiral determined to stand out with his whole fleet and give battle to Lord Howe, considering that to fight, even under a disadvantage, would be better than to stay there at anchor. He sent word of this determination to General Sullivan, with the promise that as soon as he should have disposed of the British fleet he would return to Newport and aid him again in the attack.

At half-past seven in the morning of the 10th of August, he gave orders to the fleet to clear the decks for action; and at half-past eight, to get under way. Under a heavy cannonade from the batteries upon Rhode Island, which were found now to be stronger and much better served than when he had entered, he ran by them a second time, and succeeded in clearing all his ships without serious damage, although they received here and there a shot, and without losing a man on the flag-ship. At half-past ten they had passed the last English battery and stood out to sea, having left as a protection to General Sullivan three frigates, besides the Stanley (prize) in the East Channel and the galley Dauphin in the West Channel. Upon his approach, the British fleet cut their cables and stood out under full sail, leaving behind many of their ships' boats, which, in their haste to get away, they had not stopped to pick up.[1] All this took place, as La Fayette said, in describing it,[2] "in the most beautiful weather in the world, and in sight of both the English and the American armies. I never was so happy as upon that day." And indeed it seemed as if the Comte d'Estaing had found at last the opportunity he so ardently sought, of measuring his strength with the British and of per-

[1] M. de Cambis, on the Languedoc, *ubi supra*.

[2] Letter to the Duc d'Ayen, 11th September, 1778: Correspondance de La Fayette, i. 214.

forming a brilliant action for the glory of France and for the cause of Independence in America.

Lord Howe's fleet, which was found to consist of thirty-six sail, of which nine or ten appeared to be smaller vessels, probably the transports upon which he was convoying some four thousand troops to reinforce the garrison at Newport, continued its course under full press of canvas, in the direction of New York, with the French fleet pursuing, throughout that day and the ensuing night; and upon the next day it became evident that the Comte d'Estaing was gaining the advantage of position, whilst at the same time he was overtaking the enemy. About four o'clock in the afternoon he gave orders for a general attack, which Admiral Howe, who perceived that he could no longer escape it, was now preparing for, when suddenly the sea became rough and a gale arose of almost unexampled fury, which concealed the two fleets from each other in the darkness that accompanied it, separated them from each other, and beat upon them all night with such violence that it left them crippled and torn when daylight came, so that neither admiral could think of beginning the combat, but each, occupied entirely with the welfare of his own fleet, took the best course possible to bring his ships with safety into port. During the course of the night the French admiral's ship, the Languedoc, had lost all her masts, and finally her rudder gave way, which left her tossing helplessly about upon the sea; the ship of the line César was entirely lost to sight, the Marseillais had lost two of her masts, and all had suffered to a greater or less degree, until the Comte d'Estaing, almost in despair at the misfortunes which pursued him everywhere and now threatened to overwhelm him, compared himself to a man who had had both arms and both legs cut off at once.[1] Whilst the Languedoc was drifting without sail or rudder,

[1] The Comte d'Estaing's official Report to the Secretary of the French Navy, *ubi supra*.

she fell into the course of a British frigate, the Renown, which immediately attacked her, bringing its guns to bear upon her at the stern and maintaining its position in such a manner that, whilst the flag-ship's guns were for the most part unavailable, the British shot entered at the stern and swept her gun-deck from end to end. Nothing could have saved the ship from capture if the British captain had continued the action, for, as M. d'Estaing said, there "would soon have been little left on board to destroy except the officers and men;" but, for some unexplained reason, the Renown hauled off after having fired three volleys, and continued her course.

The Marseillais, ship of the line, was similarly engaged with a British ship of fifty guns, the Preston, from which she sustained a warm attack, crippled as she was, but managed to disengage herself after a gallant defence.

Finally, on the 17th of August, the admiral collected his ships, and, placing the Languedoc, upon which he still remained, in tow of one of the others, he prepared for the return to Newport according to his promise made to General Sullivan. To this proposal his officers were almost unanimously opposed; and upon being called to a council they insisted that it was now the admiral's duty, in view of the condition of the fleet and under the provisions of his instructions, to sail at once for Boston, where the ships might be repaired. M. d'Estaing overruled them, however, to this extent, at least, although their contention showed something of the bitterness which no doubt arose from their jealousy of him personally, that he obliged them to return to Newport first, promising them that he would then conduct the fleet to Boston. "All the opinions, very many arguments, and the dictates of reason itself," he said, "urged me to steer directly for that port [Boston]; it was the rendezvous established in my sealed orders. But my duty before all else was, to prove to the new allies of His Majesty that we were ready to sacrifice

everything in order to keep a promise that we had once made. Our need of water, and the uncertainty as to what might happen, could not release us from a fixed engagement, and I felt that I must inform General Sullivan and assist him, by the presence of the fleet, either to conquer or to retreat. And so we came to anchor, without further accident, before Rhode Island."[1] Credit was not given to the Comte d'Estaing, at that day, for this determination to keep his word; nor has it generally been remembered to his honor by the writers who have treated the subject in later times. Men were blinded by disappointment and angered by the loss of an opportunity upon which such promising hopes had rested; and, in their outbursts of passion, they threw upon him the burden of responsibility for all their ills. However willing he might have been to resume the plan of attack upon Newport where he had left it ten days before, there were two considerations which materially changed his attitude now and induced him to pursue the course he did: one was his greatly weakened condition, and the other was the fear that the fleet of Admiral Byron, which he knew had left England, might appear at any moment, either alone or in conjunction with Lord Howe, and hold him at its mercy. "The same operation which came near being disastrous to us," he said, "when we had our full strength, would have been all the more imprudent to undertake now, because two vessels reported having chased some ships of the enemy which from their armament were seen to be certainly a part of the squadron commanded by Admiral Byron. Besides, in order to hope for success, we should have had to disarm the fleet, which, if it had been blockaded or set fire to, between positions held by the enemy, would inevitably have been lost; and it would have been uselessly sacrificed."[2]

[1] Official Report of the Comte d'Estaing to the Secretary of the French Navy, *ubi supra.*

[2] Ibid.

Having thus decided, M. d'Estaing despatched one of the officers of his flag-ship, the Comte de Cambis, aboard the Senegal, an English prize taken during the pursuit of Lord Howe, to inform General Sullivan that he was at the entrance to the channel at Newport, but that he did not intend now to go in. M. de Cambis made all haste to carry this message from the admiral; and, having landed at Point Judith, he met several American officers anxiously waiting there for news of the fleet. The storm which had raged upon the ocean had also fallen with exceeding violence upon the country about Newport; the heavy rain had drenched the troops, whose tents were quickly blown down, and they had suffered greatly from exposure to which most of them were not accustomed. Everybody was alarmed for the welfare of the fleet, which it was known must have been in peril, and General Sullivan had placed lookouts along the coast to bring him any tidings of it that they might be able to obtain. It was one of these parties that M. de Cambis fell in with; and, in reply to his questions, he learned that General Sullivan was still upon Rhode Island. M. de Cambis wrote a letter to him, in accordance with his instructions, which he sent by one of the American officers, in which he announced to him "that the Comte d'Estaing had sent to inform him that the French fleet had returned to Rhode Island, in compliance with the promise which he had made, but that the total dismasting of two of his principal ships by a gale which had come upon him whilst he was pursuing the English obliged M. d'Estaing to go into port for a short time in order to make repairs and to put himself in condition to carry on the operations against the common enemy; that therefore the fleet would not come nearer to Rhode Island, because M. d'Estaing feared that if he did so he should not be able in the crippled condition of his vessels to come up sufficiently to the prevailing southwest winds to sail around Nantucket; and he begged His Ex-

cellency General Sullivan to send notice to the French corvette and the three frigates which were in the Eastern Passage, of his departure for Boston, with the request that they should join him there immediately." [1]

Nothing could exceed the disappointment and discontent with which this communication was received in the American camp. General Sullivan had not made material progress during the absence of the fleet, it is true, but he had at least been able to hold his own. The situation of the army was critical now, and, whilst he felt certain of carrying the works before Newport if he had the assistance of the allies, there was little hope of his success if he should be left to fight single-handed. The departure of the fleet at that moment seemed to the Americans unreasonable and unjust; it aroused a tumult of feeling, in the midst of which many passionate things were said and many acts committed upon our side in which we were not always reasonable or always just; and, for the time, the sense of loss to ourselves, of threatened defeat, of mortification before the eyes of the expectant country, evoked the dormant race feeling which all had hoped was forgotten. It was an instant of very serious danger for America. The loss of Newport was a subject to be treated in cooler moments as totally insignificant, compared with that which we should have sustained in the rupture of our alliance with France; for the Revolution was not nearly accomplished in that summer of 1778, and we still stood greatly in need of the countenance and support of the French nation which we received, to our advantage and with gratitude, afterward. Fortunately, there were wiser counsels, which ultimately prevailed and counteracted the heedless and somewhat petulant conduct of those who, under the stress of circumstances, were unable to see beyond the limit of the then present time. The Comte de Cambis brought with

[1] Journal of the Comte de Cambis aboard the Languedoc, *ubi supra.*

him a letter for General Sullivan, written on the Languedoc by M. d'Estaing on the 21st of August, as follows:[1]

"Our cables were cut, and the fire of the batteries, which we were about to pass to attack the enemy's squadron, had commenced, when I received the letter, which you did me the honor to write on the 9th instant. It was not then possible for me to answer it otherwise than by pursuing the English fleet and preventing it from landing any succors. The Count de Cambis has been charged to acquaint you with my present situation, and of the necessity which compels me to go to Boston. I could not myself discharge this melancholy duty, because with a vessel deprived of all her masts, her rudder broken and unshipped, one is extremely uncertain of his destiny. I have nevertheless as yet the consolation of being sufficiently master of it to fulfil the promise verbally made, that I would in any event return to you, dead or alive. This promise, and the advantage which our momentary presence may render to you, have caused me to shut my eyes to all other considerations. In this perhaps I have been imprudent, and my zeal may have blinded me. I have thought that I could not run too great a hazard to prove, in the name of the King, how much His Majesty is attached to his allies; but I should be culpable in my duty to America herself, if I could forget for a moment the welfare of a squadron destined for her defence. I regretted to Colonel Fleury that you should have landed on the Island a day before the time agreed upon between us, and I should be greatly afflicted to know that you are in danger. I was informed that you had then only two thousand men. To decide upon your motives is a wrong which I have not committed. I have refrained from censure; and the twelve thousand men now under your command will probably prove the correctness of the step by a success which I desire as a citizen, and an admirer of your bravery and talents."

This letter was written, but had not yet been sent, when M. d'Estaing received one from General Sullivan written the day before, as soon as the fleet had been sighted, in which he begged him to join in an attack upon the enemy. The admiral replied to it in a postscript declining to do so, upon the ground of the disabled and

[1] Sparks, Writings of Washington, vi. 44, note.

dispersed condition of his fleet, the naval strength of the enemy, the chance that reinforcements might reach them at any moment, and the positive orders of the King, that in case of disaster, or of his finding the enemy's force superior to his own, he should go for safety to the harbor of Boston.

General Sullivan now turned to La Fayette, with the hope of persuading the admiral to change his resolution and come into Rhode Island, where he promised that provisions should be procured for his ships, and abundance of fresh water, and even that new masts should be furnished him and all the repairs made that were necessary after the damage done to his fleet by the storm. La Fayette set out immediately, accompanied by General Greene and several other officers, for the Languedoc, upon this errand, which he fulfilled with great earnestness and with a sincere wish that the misunderstanding which he already felt very keenly himself might be cleared away, in order that the Americans and his countrymen might again be united. He urged the admiral to accede to General Sullivan's request if it were possible for him under any circumstances to do so, or at least to send a force of infantry and marines to take part in the attack. This latter proposal the Comte d'Estaing was inclined to listen to, provided the garrison could be carried by assault within two days; but as it was impossible to assure him of that, and as he was unwilling to delay his voyage to Boston for a longer time, that hope for aid had to be abandoned. Nevertheless, upon La Fayette's continued entreaties, he called a council of war composed of all his captains, to which he submitted the propositions of General Sullivan. They were unanimously opposed by the council, and it was decided that the fleet should proceed at once to Boston.

It is extremely difficult to determine from the documents now in our possession how far the personal inclina-

tion of M. d'Estaing impelled him to remain at Newport, in spite of the distressed condition of his fleet, to take the chances of escaping the arrival of a superior British fleet and to help General Sullivan in the proposed attack. The popular belief was, at the time, that he would have done so if his officers had been willing, but that they overruled him. It does not appear likely, however, that this was the case. His purpose in returning to Newport was the very honorable one of keeping his word to the American general and at the same time supporting him by his presence if he desired to make a retreat to the mainland. The conciliatory tone of his letter in reference to General Sullivan's movement to the island on the day before the one agreed upon was merely the courtesy of one general officer speaking in friendly terms to another: the lack of consideration which had wounded his feelings upon that occasion was still fresh in his mind; and while there is every reason to believe that, if his forces had remained intact, he would loyally have performed his part in the expedition at Newport, yet the reflection is inevitable in studying this subject that circumstances justified him in complying with his orders to go to Boston, and there was now no inducement for him to go out of his way to do a favor for General Sullivan by performing an extraordinary service from which that gentleman must reap at least the larger share of the honor and the glory. M. de Cambis reported to him that "the Americans had done nothing as yet, and that the siege of Newport was no further advanced than the day we left."[1] At all events, the opinions of the other French officers were definitively fixed, whatever the admiral may have thought. The injudicious move of General Sullivan had shaken their confidence in the promises now made on his behalf by La Fayette, and M. de Cambis wrote in his journal, what

[1] Journal of the Comte de Cambis on the Languedoc, *ubi supra.*

was probably an exact reflection of the sentiment on shipboard, "We have already taken too great risks not to be wary now of their [the Americans'] hopes and promises, and we could not forget the unfortunate situation from which only an extraordinary accident happily rescued us when the squadron of Lord Howe appeared two weeks before, to consent to put ourselves back into a position that would have been all the more critical since our fleet was weakened by the absence of one large ship and by two others dismasted, and since we were assured by the discoveries of the Fantasque and the Sagittaire that Admiral Byron's fleet had arrived."

On the other hand, the Marquis de La Fayette did not share this feeling with his countrymen toward his comrades in America. His conduct was admirable throughout all these negotiations, in which he still continued to take the principal part as intermediary between the two parties, and there is no doubt that he exerted all his powers of persuasion to induce the Comte d'Estaing to comply with General Sullivan's request, not only whilst he was on board the admiral's ship, but also after he came ashore again, in his communications from the camp. In his devotion to the American cause La Fayette evidently acted at the request of General Sullivan; and he submitted to that officer the letter which he addressed to the Comte d'Estaing before it was sent off. Upon his return from visiting M. d'Estaing, from whom he had brought a communication to General Sullivan, he wrote:[1]

"At the Headquarters of General Sullivan, 21st August.

"I have this moment arrived here, Monsieur le Comte, and I have delivered the letter, which appeared to me very greatly to disconcert the plans of those who were most interested in it. They will communicate to you, at greater length, both their present fears and their hopes which they now see destroyed; though it seems to me that *a great many things* had already been

[1] Revue d'Histoire diplomatique, sixième année, No. 3, p. 418.

expressed in General Greene's letter. You will receive one from General Sullivan and one from Mr. Hancock, and I am requested to add one to these also. I should make it very long if I were now to repeat all that I took the liberty of saying to you in the conversations you have been kind enough to hold with me; but it would be exceedingly short if I were not to repeat anything at all. At all events, I may safely say that I have never seen these gentlemen so positive as they now are of the facilities that you will find here, or so confident of our success. They undertake to answer for these things with an assurance which, I must confess, seems attractive, and of which you will be enabled yourself to judge, for I have advised them to explain their position with great clearness. It is reported here that you have certainly not gone yet, and it is with this hope that these gentlemen are writing to you; you understand that I cannot resist sending my letter with theirs, but I beg you not to reply to it, because your time is of so much importance to you that I would not have you waste it upon me. But if you have any new orders to give me I earnestly beg you to send them to me, and I shall as faithfully perform them.

"I have received to-day *the most positive* assurances, from the persons who are writing to you, in regard to the matters upon which *I was in doubt.* I confess that if *I accept Mr. Hancock's opinion*, I have my misgivings as to the resources you will find at Boston. Pardon me, Monsieur le Comte, if I cause you unnecessary regret, or if I fall into repetitions which are equally so; I trust you will excuse me in view of the necessity of the case, and of my duty. I share with you most sincerely your feelings upon this occasion, and I believe myself worthy of a part of your affection because of the sincerity of my own. Adieu, Monsieur le Comte. My tender attachment for you is joined with the boundless love that I bear for my country and my wishes for the success of our arms, and I shall not be satisfied until I am able to go out either to conquer or to die, with you and under your command.

"LAFAYETTE.

"General Sullivan, to whom I have read the greater part of this letter, approves of the assurances I have given you from him, and I shall leave my letter with him to be forwarded to you. In regard to certain matters of which I am necessarily ignorant myself, I am obliged to base our hopes upon those which are held out to me by the people whom I consult."

This was certainly as strong an appeal as La Fayette could make to the Comte d'Estaing under the circum-

stances which governed the relations of the two men, since he was but a youth communicating his opinions to a man who was by many years his senior, an untried captain in the French service venturing to discuss military questions with the lieutenant-general and admiral of the fleet. No doubt his personal relations with M. d'Estaing permitted him to advance in this direction far beyond the limit which his military rank would have prescribed, and he evidently took advantage of them on this occasion to exert every influence at his command to aid General Sullivan and to strengthen the cause of Independence in America.

It was of no avail, however, for the council of war had already decided, as we have seen, to put in to Boston; and during the night of the 21st of August, the day upon which La Fayette's letter was written, the fleet weighed anchor and set sail. This was practically the end of the Comte d'Estaing's expedition to the United States in 1778. We have followed it in its details from the day when the fleet set sail from Toulon; we have studied its character and noted its vicissitudes; we have seen with what bright prospect the French standard was unfurled upon the high seas as the emblem of vengeance against Great Britain and of victory for the cause of freedom in America, and finally how M. d'Estaing's hopes had to be relinquished when victory seemed almost within his grasp. The best that can be said of the expedition is, that it was a disappointment. It left unfulfilled the anticipations of the French people, by whom this enterprise was looked upon as a new source of national glory; it left a feeling of discouragement and depression in America which for a moment caused our countrymen to despair of their ultimate success in the struggle for liberty. The mortification arising from our sense of failure led to expressions of resentment which, while they are not to be justified or approved of, are perfectly

intelligible under the circumstances; indeed, General Washington pointed out to the Marquis de La Fayette that they "would more than probably have fallen in a much higher degree upon a fleet of our own, if we had one in the same situation."[1]

As soon as General Sullivan was convinced that the French admiral was really going to Boston, he drew up a formal protest addressed to him, which he caused to be signed by all his general officers except the Marquis de La Fayette, the tone of which reflected rather his own passionate disappointment than the mature judgment of a man who had carefully considered the circumstances before him; and he hastily despatched Colonel Laurens with it in an American vessel, to overtake the fleet. In addition to speaking of the "ruinous consequences which would result to this army from his abandoning the harbor of Newport at this time," which expression was included in its preamble,[2] this document contained the following arguments among others presented to the Comte d'Estaing against his going away:

"*Fifthly*, Because the honor of the French nation must be injured by their fleet abandoning their allies upon an island, in the midst of an expedition agreed to by the Count himself. This must make such an unfavorable impression on the minds of Americans at large, and create such jealousies between them and their hitherto esteemed allies, as will, in a great measure, frustrate the good intentions of His Most Christian Majesty and the American Congress, who have mutually endeavored to promote the greatest harmony and confidence between the French people and the Americans. . . .

"*Ninthly*, Because, even though the facts pretended were fully proved, and it became necessary for the fleet to proceed to Boston, yet no possible reason can be assigned for the Count d'Estaing's taking with him the land forces which he has on board, and which

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[1] To La Fayette, 1st September, 1778: Sparks, Writings of Washington, vi. 49.

[2] See the full text in Amory's Sullivan, p. 77.

might be of great advantage in the expedition, and of no possible use to him in Boston. . . .

"We, therefore, for the reasons above assigned, do, in the most solemn manner, protest against the measure, as derogatory to the honor of France, contrary to the intentions of His Most Christian Majesty and the interest of his nation, and destructive in the highest degree to the welfare of the United States of America, and highly injurious to the alliance formed between the two nations."

It is evident that General Sullivan misinterpreted the demands of the situation, as well as the character of the man with whom he was dealing. He justified the writing of this communication upon the ground that "the Count himself wished to remain with us, but was by his captains overruled in council."[1] This, if true, would merely have added to the indiscretion upon his part of having committed such an act the error of judgment by which he expected through a personal offence toward the Comte d'Estaing to draw him away from his own officers, with whom he naturally sympathized and by whose opinions he was influenced. Colonel Laurens overtook the flagship at the entrance to Boston harbor, and performed his graceless mission of delivering the protest to the admiral, who said in reply that "this paper imposed on the commander of the King's squadron the painful but necessary law of profound silence."[2]

General Washington, who plainly saw the danger that lay in this unwary step, wrote to General Sullivan, from White Plains, on the 1st of September,[3]—

"The disagreement between the army under your command and the fleet has given me very singular uneasiness. The continent at large is concerned in our cordiality, and it should be kept up by all possible means, consistent with our honor and policy. First impressions you know are generally longest remembered,

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[1] Letter to Washington, 3d September.

[2] Colonel Laurens to General Washington, 2d September: Sparks, Writings of Washington, vi. 46, note.

[3] Sparks, Writings of Washington, vi. 44.

and will serve to fix in a great degree our national character among the French. In our conduct towards them we should remember, that they are a people old in war, very strict in military etiquette, and apt to take fire, where others scarcely seem warmed. Permit me to recommend, in the most particular manner, the cultivation of harmony and good agreement, and your endeavours to destroy that ill humor, which may have got into the officers. It is of the greatest importance also, that the soldiers and the people should know nothing of the misunderstanding, or, if it has reached them, that ways may be used to stop its progress and prevent its effects.

"I have received from Congress the enclosed, by which you will perceive their opinion with regard to keeping secret the protest of the general officers. I need add nothing on this head. I have one thing, however, more to say. I make no doubt but you will do all in your power to forward the repair of the Count's fleet, and render it fit for service, by your recommendations for that purpose to those who can be immediately instrumental."

The enclosure mentioned by the Commander-in-Chief in the last paragraph of his letter related to the action taken by Congress upon the protest sent to the French admiral. When it was read in Congress, in connection with the correspondence relating to it, an order was made that their contents should be kept secret, but that the President should communicate them to M. Gérard, the French Minister, informing him at the same time of the injunction of secrecy. It was also ordered that General Washington should take every measure in his power to prevent the protest from being made public.[1]

The Marquis de La Fayette was incensed at the request that he should attend the meeting at which this protest was being discussed and signed; for he regarded that measure as an insult to his nation, and the call upon him to take part in it as a personal indignity, which wounded him where he was most sensitive, in his loyal admiration for whatever was French.

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[1] Secret Journal of Congress, i. 89.

He wrote to M. d'Estaing on the 22d of August,[1]—

"You are about to receive a long memoir [the protest], Monsieur le Comte, and I shall accompany it by a short letter. The condition I am in, the different feelings that animate me, and the outbursts of impatience to which I have given way, make it impossible for me either to talk to you or to write with a quiet mind. Can you believe that I was summoned to a council where a protest was made against a measure taken by the French fleet! I told these gentlemen that my native land is dearer to me than America, that whatever France does is right, that M. le C^te^ d'Estaing is my friend, and that I am ready to support these opinions by my sword, which has never been put to a better use. I added that if they had shown very little delicacy, upon their part, in summoning me, I should use little also, in my choice of expressions. They all apologized and said that they were far from requiring me to give my vote. In the mean time, M. le Comte, fancy my situation; for from this time forward I shall be in fear that I may have to resent every word I hear spoken.

"I confess that the general consternation has been far greater than I should ever have thought possible; it was impossible to foresee the effect which your departure has had upon men's minds. Pardon me, Monsieur le Comte, but this is not the first time that I have transgressed by being too frank; I told you the other day all that I knew,—I shall tell you now what I see, and much more than I expected. My heart will always be open to a man whom I love as I do you.

"Adieu, M. le Comte. I am told alarming stories about the risks you run in going to Boston, and I am uneasy about it; I shall have no peace until I know that you have arrived. If I leave the Island I shall go to that city immediately. I hope nobody will be upon Rhode Island after I leave, and that we shall not have to regret any loss, unless I have had a chance, at least, to share in the danger. The last boat will be the one to take me over; and, *in any event*, I beg you to accept the homage of my admiration for your virtue, for your patriotism, and for all that makes you loved and respected by . . . "

This letter is extremely interesting as a reflection of La Fayette's character and as a proof that in the midst of this conflict of feeling which arose from the comments all

[1] Revue d'Histoire diplomatique, sixième année, No. 3, p. 419.

about him upon the action of his countrymen, whilst he was even upon the point of drawing his sword at times in reply to words spoken in his presence, he continued to do his duty conscientiously as an American soldier, and remained at his post always with the one purpose in view, of furthering the success of the cause of liberty and of being the last man to leave whilst there was danger to be incurred. It is a remarkable example of the subordination of self and personal interests to the higher considerations of devotion and self-sacrifice by which one is bound in the loyal performance of duty. In this La Fayette was a thorough soldier.

In the mean time, General Sullivan, not content with the demonstration made by him in his protest, issued a general order to the army, on the 24th of September, in which he lamented the sudden departure of the fleet, but added that "he [General Sullivan] yet hopes the event will prove America able to procure with her own arms that which her allies refused to assist her in obtaining." La Fayette, angered by this insinuation of abandonment, immediately called upon General Sullivan and demanded that the words contained in his order should be retracted in a similar order. After he had gone back to his quarters, the general returned his visit, during which a warm altercation took place between them, which threatened to lead to a duel.[1] But, as a result, General Sullivan said, in an order issued by him on the 26th of September, "It having been supposed by some persons that by the orders of the 24th inst. the commander-in-chief meant to insinuate that the departure of the French fleet was owing to a fixed determination not to assist in the present enterprise; and as the general could not wish to give the least color to ungenerous and illiberal minds to make such an unfair interpretation, he thinks it necessary to

[1] Mémoires de ma Main, i. 57.

say that as he could not possibly be acquainted with the orders of the French admiral, he could not determine whether the removal of the fleet was absolutely necessary or not, and therefore did not mean to censure an act which the admiral's orders might render absolutely necessary." [1]

This painful situation had continued but a short time when La Fayette appealed to General Washington in a letter which reflects his feelings and the strained relations between himself and the other French officers with their American comrades as well as any document that we now possess in relation to the event. It drew from the Commander-in-Chief a soothing reply, in which, with his wise judgment and paternal kindness, he touched gently upon the injured places in the young officer's mind, allaying the irritation caused by angry words and personal offences, and encouraging him with assurances of his warm friendship and affectionate sympathy. At the same time, he wrote conciliatory letters to General Sullivan and General Greene, and shortly afterward the tension was relieved, and the former cordial relations were restored.

La Fayette's letter to General Washington was as follows: [2]

"Camp before Newport, 25th August, 1778.

"My dear General,—I had expected in answering your first letter that something interesting would have happened that I might communicate to your excellency. Every day was going to terminate our uncertainties; nay, every day was going to bring the hope of a success which I did promise myself to acquaint you of. Such was the reason of my deferring what my duty and inclination did urge me to do much sooner. I am now indebted for two favours of yours, which I beg leave to offer here my thanks for. The first letter reached me in the time we expected to hear again from the French fleet; the second I have just received. My reason for not writing the same day the French fleet went to Boston was, that I did not choose to trouble your friendship with the sentiments of an afflicted, injured heart, and injured by that

[1] Glover MSS., in the Essex Institute.

[2] La Fayette's Memoirs, American edition, i. 186.

very people I came from so far to love and support. Don't be surprised, my dear General; the generosity of your honest mind would be offended at the shocking sight I have under my eyes.

"So far am I from a critical disposition that I will not give you the journal of our operations, neither of several instances during our staying here, which, however, might occupy some room in this letter. I will not even say to you, how contracted was the French fleet when they wanted to come in at their arrival; which, according to the report of the advertors, would have had the greatest effect. How surprised was the Admiral, when, after a formal and agreed convention, one hour after the American general had given a new written assurance, our troops made the landing a day before it was expected. How mortified the French officers were to find out that there was not a gun left in these very forts to whose protection they were recommended. All these things, and many others, I would not take notice of, if they were not at this moment the supposed ground upon which, it is said, that the Count d'Estaing is gone on to Boston. Believe me, my dear sir, upon my honour, the Admiral, though a little astonished by some instances of conduct on our part, did consider them in the same light as you and myself would have done, and if he is gone off, it is because he thought himself obliged by necessity.

"Let us consider, my dear general, the motions of that fleet since it was proposed by the Count d'Estaing himself, and granted by the King in behalf of the United States. I will not go so far up as to remember other instances of the affection the French nation have for the Americans. The news of that fleet have occasioned the evacuation of Philadelphia. Its arrival has opened all the harbours, secured all the coasts, obliged the British navy to be together. Six of those frigates, two of them I have seen, sufficient for terrifying all the trading people of the two Carolinas, are taken or burnt. The Count d'Estaing went to offer battle, and act as a check to the British navy for a long time. At New York, it was agreed he should go to Rhode Island, and there he went. They prevented him from going in at first; afterwards, he was desired to come in, and so he did. The same day we landed without his knowledge; an English fleet appears in sight. His being divided into three parts by *our directions*, for, though he is a *lieutenant general*, he never availed himself of that title, made him uneasy about his situation. But finding the next morning that the wind was northerly, being also convinced that it was his

duty to prevent any reinforcement at Newport, he goes out under the hottest fire of the British land batteries, he puts the British navy to flight, and pursues them, and they were all in his hands when that horrid storm arrives to ruin all our hopes. Both fleets are divided, scattered; the Cæsar, a 74 gun ship, is lost; the Marseillais, of the same size, loses her masts, and after that accident is obliged to send back an enemy's ship of 64; the Languedoc having lost her masts, unable to be governed and make any motions, separated from the others, is attacked by a ship of the line against which she could only bring six guns.

"When the storm was over, they met again in a shattered condition, and the Cæsar was not to be found. All the captains represented to their general that, after a so long navigation, in such a want of victuals, water, &c., which they had not been yet supplied with, after the intelligence given by General Sullivan that there was a British fleet coming, they should go to Boston; but the Count d'Estaing had promised to come here again, and so he did at all events. The news of his arrival and situation came by the Senegal, a frigate taken from the enemy. General Greene and myself went on board. The Count expressed to me not so much as to the envoy from General Sullivan, than as to his friend, the unhappy circumstances he was in. Bound by express orders from the King to go to Boston in case of an accident or a superior fleet, engaged, by the common sentiment of all the officers, *even of some American pilots*, that he would ruin all his squadron in deferring his going to Boston, he called a new council of war, and finding everybody of the same opinion, he did not think himself justifiable in staying here any longer, and took leave of me with true affliction not being able to assist America for some days, which has been rewarded with the most horrid ungratefulness; but no matter. I am only speaking of facts. The Count said to me these last words: after many months of sufferings, my men will rest some days; I will man my ships, and, if I am assisted in getting masts, &c., three weeks after my arrival I shall go out again, and then we shall fight for the glory of the French name, and the interests of America.

"The day *the Count* went off, the general American officers drew a protestation, which, as *I had been very strangely called there*, I refused to sign, but I wrote a letter to the admiral. The protestation and the letter did not arrive in time.

"Now, my dear general, I am going to hurt your generous feelings by an imperfect picture of what I am forced to see. Forgive me for it; it is not to the commander-in-chief, it is to my

most dearest friend, General Washington, that I am speaking. I want to lament with him the ungenerous sentiments I have been forced to see in many American breasts.

"Could you believe, that forgetting any national obligation, forgetting what they were owing to that same fleet, what they were yet to expect from them, and instead of resenting their accidents as these of allies and brothers, the people turned mad at their departure, and wishing them all the evils in the world, did treat them as a generous one would be ashamed to treat the most inveterate enemies. You cannot have any idea of the horrors which were to be heard in that occasion. Many leaders themselves finding they were disappointed, abandoned their minds to illiberality and ungratefulness. Frenchmen of the highest character have been exposed to the most disagreeable circumstances, and yet, myself, the friend of America—the friend of General Washington. I am more upon a warlike footing in the American lines, than when I come near the British lines at Newport.

"Such is, my dear general, the true state of matters. I am sure it will infinitely displease and hurt your feelings. I am also sure you will approve the part I have taken in it, which was to stay much at home with all the French gentlemen who are here, and declare, at the same time, that anything thrown before me against my nation I would take as the most particular affront.

"Inclosed I send you the general orders of the 24th, upon which I thought I was obliged to pay a visit to General Sullivan, who has agreed to alter them in the following manner. Remember, my dear general, that I don't speak to the commander-in-chief, but to my friend, that I am far from complaining of anybody. I have no complaints at all to make you against any one; but I lament with you that I have had an occasion of seeing so ungenerous sentiments in American hearts.

"I will tell you the true reason. The leaders of the expedition are, most of them, ashamed to return after having spoken of their Rhode Island success in proud terms before their family, their friends, their internal enemies. The others, regardless of the expense France has been put to by that fleet, of the tedious, tiresome voyage, which so many men have had for their service, though they are angry that the fleet takes three weeks, upon the whole campaign, to refit themselves, they cannot bear the idea of being brought to a small expense, to the loss of a little time, to the fatigue of staying some few days more in a camp at some few miles off their houses; for I am very far from looking upon the

expedition as having miscarried, and there I see even a certainty of success.

"If, as soon as the fleet is repaired, which (in case they are treated as one is in a country one is not at war with,) would be done in three weeks from this time, the Count d'Estaing was to come around, the expedition seems to offer a very good prospect. If the enemy evacuates New York, we have the whole continental army, if not, we might perhaps have some more men, what number, however, I cannot pretend to judge. All that I know is, that I shall be very happy to see the fleet co-operating with General Washington himself.

"I think I shall be forced, by the board of general officers, to go soon to Boston. That I will do as soon as required, though with reluctance, for I do not believe that *our position on this part of the island is without danger;* but my principle is to do everything which is thought good for the service. I have very often rode express to the fleet, to the frigates, and that, I assure you, with the greatest pleasure; on the other hand, I may perhaps be useful to the fleet. Perhaps, too, it will be in the power of the Count to do something which might satisfy them. I wish, my dear general, you could know as well as myself, how desirous the Count d'Estaing is to forward the public good, to help your success, and to serve the cause of America.

"I earnestly beg you will recommend to the several chief persons of Boston to do everything they can to put the French fleet in a situation for sailing soon. Give me leave to add, that I wish many people, by the declaration of your sentiments in that affair, could learn how to regulate theirs, and blush at the sight of your generosity.

"You will find my letter immense. I began it one day and finished it the next, as my time was swallowed up by those eternal councils of war. I shall have the pleasure of writing you from Boston. I am afraid the Count d'Estaing will have felt to the quick the behaviour of the people on this occasion. You cannot conceive how distressed he was to be prevented from serving this country for some time. I do assure you his circumstances were very critical and distressing.

"For my part, my sentiments are known to the world. My tender affection for General Washington is added to them; therefore I want no apologies for writing upon what has afflicted me both as an American and a Frenchman.

"I am much obliged to you for the care you are so kind as to take of that poor horse of mine; had he not found such a good

stable as this at headquarters, he would have cut a pitiful figure at the end of his travels, and I should have been too happy if there had remained so much of the horse as the bones, the skin, and the four shoes.

"Farewell, my dear general; whenever I quit you, I meet with some disappointment and misfortune. I did not need it to desire seeing you as much as possible. With the most tender affection and high regard, I have the honour to be, &c.

"Dear General,—I must add to my letter, that I have received one from General Greene, very different from the expressions I have to complain of, he seems there very sensible of what I feel. I am very happy when placed in a situation to do justice to any one."

To this General Washington replied as follows:[1]

"White Plains, 1 September, 1778.

"My dear Marquis,—I have been honored with your favor of the 25th ultimo by Monsieur Pontgebaud, and I wish my time, which at present is taken up by a committee of Congress, would permit me to go fully into the contents of it. This, however, it is not in my power to do. But in one word let me say, I feel everything that hurts the sensibility of a gentleman, and consequently upon the present occasion I feel for you and for our good and great allies the French. I feel myself hurt, also, at every illiberal and unthinking reflection, which may have been cast upon the Count d'Estaing, or the conduct of the fleet under his command; and lastly I feel for my country. Let me entreat you, therefore, my dear Marquis, to take no exception at unmeaning expressions, uttered perhaps without consideration, and in the first transport of disappointed hope. Everybody, Sir, who reasons will acknowledge the advantages which we have derived from the French fleet, and the zeal of the commander of it; but, in a free and republican government, you cannot restrain the voice of the multitude. Every man will speak as he thinks, or, more properly, without thinking, and consequently will judge of effects without attending to the causes. The censures, which have been levelled at the officers of the French fleet, would more than probably have fallen in a much higher degree upon a fleet of our own, if we had one in the same situation. It is the nature of man to be displeased with everything that disappoints a favorite hope or flattering

[1] Sparks, Writings of Washington, vi. 49.

project; and it is the folly of too many of them to condemn without investigating circumstances.

"Let me beseech you therefore, my good Sir, to afford a healing hand to the wound, that unintentionally has been made. America esteems your virtues and your services, and admires the principles upon which you act. Your countrymen in our army look up to you as their patron. The Count and his officers consider you as a man high in rank, and high in estimation here and also in France; and I, your friend, have no doubt but you will use your utmost endeavours to restore harmony, that the honor, glory, and mutual interest of the two nations may be promoted and cemented in the firmest manner. I would say more on the subject, but am restrained for the want of time; and therefore shall only add, that, with every sentiment of esteem and regard, I am, my dear Marquis, &c." [1]

The influence which General Washington exerted upon the troubled spirits in the camp, as well as upon the wounded sensibilities of the French officers in the fleet, by the conciliatory tone of his letters and the wisdom of his counsels, was extremely effective in restoring friendship, so that even General Sullivan, whose violent expressions of disappointment were softened by the consideration of more serious questions which affected the welfare of the whole nation, wrote, on the 3d of September, to the Commander-in-Chief,—

"The justice of the observations in your Excellency's letter, respecting the departure of the French fleet, are so obvious, that, if a consciousness of my duty to yield implicit obedience to your Excellency's commands did not even make that obedience a pleasure, the reasoning alone must have pointed out the part I have to act. I have the pleasure to inform your Excellency, that, though the first struggles of passion, on so important a disappointment, were scarcely to be restrained, yet, in a few days, as it has subsided, I found means to restore the former harmony between the American and French officers of the army. The Count

[1] See also General Washington's letters to General Sullivan, 28th of August, to General Heath, 28th of August, to General Greene, 1st of September, to the President of Congress, 4th of September, and to the Comte d'Estaing, 2d and 11th of September, 1778: Sparks, Writings of Washington.

d'Estaing and myself are in the same friendship as heretofore. The reason of the protest has been explained to him, and he is now perfectly satisfied. He has offered to come on with his land forces, and do everything which I may request of him and his troops ; but the step has become unnecessary." [1]

In the mean time the services of La Fayette had again been called upon, and he had been employed, in his capacity of ambassador between the two armies, in one last effort which General Sullivan decided to make in order to obtain from the Comte d'Estaing an auxiliary force which would enable him to continue the siege of Newport. He therefore requested General de La Fayette to go to Boston, to meet the admiral there, and, after having taken every possible measure which could incite the government of Massachusetts to hasten the repairs to his vessels, to beg of him that he would send his land troops to join the American army in Rhode Island. General Greene announced this to General Washington in a letter [2] in which he says,—

"Your Excellency may rest assured that I have done everything in my power to cultivate and promote a good understanding both with the Count and the Marquis, and flatter myself that I am upon very good terms with them both. The Marquis's great thirst for glory and national attachment often run him into errors. However, he did everything to prevail upon the Admiral to coöperate with us that man could do. People censure the Admiral with great freedom, and many are impudent enough to reproach the nation through the Admiral. General Sullivan very imprudently issued something like a censure in general orders. Indeed it was an absolute censure. It opened the mouths of the army in very clamorous strains. The General was obliged to explain it away in a few days. The fermentation seems to be now subsiding and all things appear as if they would go smoothly on. The Marquis is going to Boston also, to hasten the Count's return, and if possible to get the

[1] Amory's Sullivan, p. 79.
[2] 28th August, Greene's Life of Greene, ii. 127.

French troops to join the land forces here, which will the more effectually interest the Count in the success of the expedition."

La Fayette complied immediately with General Sullivan's request. Mounting his horse, he set out on Friday, the 28th of August, the same day upon which General Greene's letter was written to the Commander-in-Chief, and, having ridden seventy miles in seven hours, he reached Boston just as the French fleet had entered the harbor. It was a personal sacrifice on his part to leave the army at that moment, because everything indicated that an action was likely to take place with the British forces, from which nothing but the most urgent requirements of duty could have induced him to absent himself. But he consoled himself with the reflection that by making the greatest haste possible he might perform an important service to the country and still be back in time to take his place upon the field. He spent the following day, Saturday, and part of Sunday, in Boston, and on Sunday night he was again before Newport, having made his return journey in six hours and a half.

General Sullivan had maintained his position on Rhode Island up to the 28th of August with a determination which was extremely creditable to him as a soldier, and at least deserved success. But circumstances were unfavorable to him, because he was conducting a siege against a well-appointed and well-disciplined force with an army composed for the most part of raw troops, not more than fifteen hundred of his men having ever been under fire before. Besides this, the militia began to return home when it became evident that no immediate assistance was to be expected from the French fleet; between two and three thousand of them left him in a single day, and his army, which he had estimated at between eight thousand and nine thousand men, was re-

duced almost immediately to a total of five thousand,—less than the number of British troops known to be under General Pigot's command at Newport. His situation was weakened, therefore, to such an extent that he could not hope to accomplish any offensive undertaking; in fact, it became a question whether he should now be able even to effect a retreat with his army under the difficulties that confronted him in the necessity of transferring it to the mainland in the face of the enemy.

At a council of war called by him, it was decided unanimously that the army should retire to the northern end of the island, to fortify the camp there and to secure the communication with the mainland. He sent forward his stores and baggage at nightfall on the 28th of August, and moved with his troops to Butt's Hill, where he encamped about two o'clock in the morning, with his right wing resting upon the west road and his left on the east road, secured by covering and flanking parties toward the water on the right and left, under Colonel Laurens and Colonel Livingston, and by a picket under Colonel Wade. As soon as it was day, the enemy discovered General Sullivan's movement, and early in the morning attacked him with nearly their whole force, divided into two columns. They met with a firm resistance from Colonels Laurens, Livingston, and Wade, to whose assistance General Sullivan sent forward two regiments, directing them to retire upon the main army in the best order they could preserve. This they did with excellent management, keeping up as they retreated a steady fire upon the enemy. The British troops advanced very close to the position of General Sullivan's left wing, but were repulsed by General Glover, after which they retired to Quaker Hill, where they formed, about a mile in front of General Sullivan's position at Butt's Hill. A heavy fire of cannon was begun upon both sides about nine o'clock, and was kept up, with several skirmishes between

the advanced parties, until about ten o'clock, when two ships of war belonging to the enemy, and some smaller armed vessels, gained the American right flank and opened fire upon it, whilst the whole British force united, under the fire of the ships, to turn General Sullivan's right. An exceedingly hot contest took place at this point, in which General Greene, who commanded the right wing, distinguished himself by his personal bravery and the skill with which he conducted the action. The British troops were driven back twice, and twice they returned to the attack, to be finally completely routed and fall back in disorder to the hill where they had first formed, leaving large numbers of their dead and wounded behind them. This action lasted about an hour. Afterward the fire of the artillery was continued, with light skirmishes, throughout the day, until nightfall. The American army held its position at Butt's Hill, and the enemy occupied the night in fortifying their camp. Upon the following morning, the 30th of August, General Sullivan received a letter from General Washington which informed him that Lord Howe had left New York with his fleet[1] on the preceding Tuesday, the 25th, with the probable design of relieving the garrison at Newport; and, while the Commander-in-Chief did not directly order him to retreat to the mainland, the tone of his letter indicated his judgment that this step had now become necessary. A council of war which was immediately convened by General Sullivan unanimously decided that the army should quit the island.

In order to perform this exceedingly difficult task, which required all the greater caution since the British outposts were only two hundred yards distant from the American sentries, General Sullivan determined to cover his design by an appearance of active preparation for

[1] Letter of 28th August: Sparks, Writings of Washington, vi. 40.

further hostilities, and ordered several tents to be pitched in sight of the enemy whilst he made an imposing demonstration of employing his whole army in strengthening his fortifications.

Meanwhile he was sending his heavy baggage and stores to the rear, and these were being shipped across without having aroused the suspicion of the enemy. At dark he ordered all the tents to be struck, and soon after he began crossing his troops. By midnight they were all in safety upon the mainland near Tiverton. It was during this evening that the Marquis de La Fayette returned from Boston. He arrived upon the island at eleven o'clock on the night of the 30th, and, notwithstanding his ride of seventy miles, which, as we have seen, he had made in six hours and a half, forgetful of fatigue, he resumed his command at once, and took charge of the rear-guard of the army. He was still in time to fulfil his prediction to the Comte d'Estaing that the last boat should be the one to take him over, and that nobody should be left upon the island after he had gone. General Sullivan said of him in his letter to Congress, "The Marquis de Lafayette arrived about eleven in the evening from Boston; where he had been, by request of the general officers, to solicit the speedy return of the fleet. He was sensibly mortified that he was out of action; and, that he might not be out of the way in case of action, he had ridden hence to Boston in seven hours, and returned in six and a half,—the distance nearly seventy miles. He returned in time enough to bring off the pickets and other parties which covered the retreat of the army, which he did in excellent order; not a man was left behind, nor the smallest article lost."[1] This retreat was most fortunate for the American army, because upon the following morning Lord Howe's fleet appeared, consisting of one hun-

[1] General Sullivan to Congress, 31st August, 1778.

dred ships of various kinds, with a strong reinforcement of land troops for the garrison under command of Sir Henry Clinton in person. If General Sullivan had been overtaken by this force while still upon the island, his chances of escaping a disaster would have been slender indeed. Congress recognized his services and voted its thanks to him and the officers and troops under his command for their fortitude in the action of the 29th of August, in which they repulsed the British forces and maintained the field; and it was resolved that the retreat was prudent, timely, and well conducted.[1]

Whilst La Fayette was in Boston he had employed every inducement at his command to persuade the Comte d'Estaing to return to the army with his land forces; and his arguments were of such weight with the admiral that he agreed to land his battalions of Foix and Hainault and to march with them to put himself under the command of General Sullivan at Newport. A session of the Council of Massachusetts was convened, largely through the influence of General Heath and General Hancock, the latter of whom had gone to Boston for the purpose of aiding the restoration of the French fleet, and La Fayette appeared with the admiral at a conference held between him and the Council upon the subjects of providing for the fleet and of reinforcing General Sullivan. When General de La Fayette returned to the army he bore with him a letter from the admiral to General Sullivan, in which M. d'Estaing announced his proposal to the Council that he should join the army, and referred to the protest with the assurance that he should not allow the offence given him by that incident to affect his present conduct. "To prove this," he added, "is one of the strongest motives which have determined me to place myself under your orders, as soon as I shall have been

[1] Journals of Congress, 9th September, 1778.

honored with a positive answer from the Council. My opinion upon the measures to be taken need never restrain yours. It shall not only be subject to yours, but even remain unrevealed whenever you shall not require me to give it."[1]

There can be no doubt of the earnest desire of M. d'Estaing to serve America. His constant efforts to prove this were defeated by a chain of events over which he could have had no control. But his disposition remained steadfast even to this final offer, in which he declared his willingness to sink his own personal feelings as to what had gone before, and to waive his rank, by taking the field at the head of a regiment like any other officer under General Sullivan's command. "I offered and was ready," he wrote to General Washington,[2] "at the head of a regiment, to go and serve under General Sullivan, as I formerly did under Marshal Saxe in the war which terminated in 1748. I should not have taken this step with the idea of strengthening an army with such a handful of men, nor of proving what is already known, that the French nation can sacrifice life with a good grace; but I was anxious to demonstrate that my countrymen could not be offended by a sudden expression of feeling, and that he who had the honor of commanding them in America was and would be at all times one of the most devoted and zealous servants of the United States." After the action at Newport, however, and after the retreat to the mainland had been effected, this offer was no longer available. M. d'Estaing's letter to General Washington called forth a reply which, aside from its expression of the generous sentiment with which the Commander-in-Chief addressed a brother officer under peculiarly distressing circumstances, is one of the most important documents we possess as a contemporary esti-

[1] Sparks, Writings of Washington, vi. 59.
[2] Ibid., p. 58.

mate of D'Estaing, and of the value of his fleet in this expedition.[1]

"To Count D'Estaing.

"Head-Quarters, 11 September, 1778.

"Sir,—I have had the honor of receiving your letter of the 5th instant, accompanied by a copy of two letters to Congress and General Sullivan. The confidence, which you have been pleased to show in communicating these papers, engages my sincere thanks. If the deepest regret, that the best concerted enterprise and bravest exertions should have been rendered fruitless by a disaster, which human prudence was incapable of foreseeing or preventing, can alleviate disappointment, you may be assured, that the whole continent sympathizes with you. It will be a consolation to you to reflect, that the thinking part of mankind do not form their judgment from events; and that their equity will ever attach equal glory to those actions which deserve success, and those which have been crowned with it. It is in the trying circumstances to which your Excellency has been exposed, that the virtues of a great mind are displayed in their brightest lustre, and that a general's character is better known, than in the moment of victory. It was yours, by every title that can give it; and the adverse element, which robbed you of your prize, can never deprive you of the glory due to you. Though your success has not been equal to your expectations, yet you have the satisfaction of reflecting, that you have rendered essential services to the common cause.

"I exceedingly lament, that, in addition to our misfortunes, there has been the least suspension of harmony and good understanding between the generals of allied nations, whose views must, like their interests, be the same. On the first intimation of it, I employed my influence in restoring what I regard as essential to the permanence of a union founded on mutual inclination, and the strongest ties of reciprocal advantage. Your Excellency's offer to the Council of Boston had a powerful tendency to promote the same end, and was a distinguished proof of your zeal and magnanimity.

"The present superiority of the enemy in naval force must for a time suspend all plans of offensive coöperation between us. It is not easy to foresee what change may take place by the arrival of succours to you from Europe, or what opening the enemy may

[1] Sparks, Writings of Washington, vi. 57.

give you to resume your activity. In this moment, therefore, every consultation on this subject would be premature. But it is of infinite importance, that we should take all the means that our circumstances will allow for the defence of the squadron, which is so precious to the common cause of France and America, and which may have become a capital object with the enemy." [1]

Finally, M. d'Estaing had the consolation of knowing that his conduct of the expedition was understood and appreciated in America by those whose good opinion he valued most, that he had won friendship and esteem which outlived the momentary ill feeling of the people after the events at Newport, and that Congress, speaking for the nation, openly recognized his zeal in the common cause by expressions of cordial sympathy and good will.

On the 17th of October, 1778, the following Resolution was adopted: [2]

"*Resolved*, That his excellency count D'Estaing hath behaved as a brave and wise officer, and that his excellency and the officers and men under his command have rendered every benefit to these States which the circumstances and nature of the service would admit of, and are fully entitled to the regards of the friends of America.

"*Resolved*, That the president transmit the foregoing resolution to his excellency the count D'Estaing, and inform him that Congress entertain the highest sense of his zeal and attachment manifested in repeated instances, and particularly in his spirited offer to lead the troops under his command from Boston, and to cooperate against Rhode Island."

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[1] For the Comte d'Estaing's account of his expedition, addressed to Congress, 26th August, 1778, see Doniol, Histoire de la Participation de la France à l'Etablissement des Etats-Unis d'Amérique, tome iii., Annexe du chapitre vii., p. 384; and for his official report to the Secretary of the French Navy, 5th November, 1778, quoted above, see ibid., Annexes du chapitre viii., p. 447. See also the letter of the Comte d'Estaing to the Secretary of the Navy, 5th November, 1778, Doniol, La Participation de la France, iii. 361.

[2] Journals of Congress, 17th October, 1778.

END OF VOLUME I.